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about the Journal

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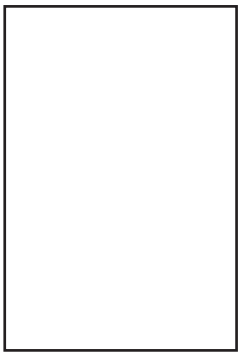

..... I am glad to receive the July- Sept. 2013 issue of the Rock Pebbles. This issue undisputedly contains many research articles of varied choice ranging from essays on the western writers as well as on eastern. Thanks a lot for covering all the length and breadth of literary arena in English literature. I think it has become indispensible reference journal for the literature lovers. I'd not forget to thank the board of editors for the cover page design which carries a photograph of Dr. P. Raja, while addressing in a function of Rock Pebbles in KIIT Campus which I had attended. At the same time Mr. Uttam B. Parekar deserves appreciation for writing such a beautiful article on a poem of the last issue of Rock Pebbles. One thing I would regretfully say that unfortunately no story has been incorporated in the present issue. .... Expecting Rock Pebbles to pilot a long, immaculate and pristine literary flight in the skies of creativity. .....

- Gobinda Sahoo
Lect. in English, S.M. Degree College,
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..... This is to tell you that while I have written a number of poems I have not published any of them. It would be very kind of you if budding writers like me are offered some space in your journals. I believe will surely touch your heart. Hope you will take notice of me. Thanking you.....

- Sourav Upadhyaya
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Editor Speaks

This poor editor (almost all literary Journal's editors are poor) oneday requested to a writer, (whose article was selected for publication) to subscribe the Journal. The editor knows that the writer is well-to-do. No doubt, the writer can afford to subscribe the Journal. Generally, an editor, (of literary Journals) while selecting articles, has to think from different angles. His prime concern is to sustain the journal. He can not adopt hard principles on selection. If he does so, the Journal can not run long. x x x x x This editor, while requesting to that writer, has an expectation that one more subscriber will be added to the list. Any publications, may it be a literary Journal or a Newspaper, have two sources to generate funds. The first one is subscription fees and the last one is advertisement charges. Literary Journals do not get commercial advts.; so funds from that source is nil. So to continue a literary Journal, the editor emphasizes on subscription fees. Moreover, literary Journals have limited subscribers. Generally, the writers are the readers. So the editors request the writers (who can afford) to subscribe their Journals. x x x Instead of keeping the request of the editor, he (the writer) in a rude tone, refused to subscribe the Journal. The manner of the writer disheartened this editor. He consoled himself : "Have patience. One refused, so what? Many others are there to subscribe. Don't get disheartened. Continue". Then, this poor editor, with a mission to present Odia literature before a broader sphere, published that article.

And this issue is enriched with so many rich articles.

Chief-Editor

CRITICISM

The Feminist Voice of Mahasweta Devi as a Clarion Call for the Oppressed and Marginalized Women: An Analysis

S.Chelliah

This paper attempts to show Mahesweta Devi as one of the prominent women novelists of Bengal enjoying wide readership, considerable fame and name by letting her work look like a bright lamp to the poor and the tribal's living in darkness and also by admiring those who raise their voice to protest against wrongs and exploitation. It also aims at focusing on her tribal outlook as not something romanticized, for her main concern is to expose the stranglehold of feudalism over lands and poor folk . This paper also attempts to show that through her writings , Mahasweta Devi has the power of moving the readers to a monumental rage against all forms of exploitation in life, for she may be labeled as champion of the oppressed and marginalized women in the modern society at large.

Epics, lyrics, plays, short stories and fables have respectable ancestries taking us back several centuries .But it is only during a period of a little more than a century that the novel, the long-sustained piece of prose fiction, has been in existence and taken root in India. The impact of Western culture on Indian culture in the later half of the nineteenth century resulted in the development of formal writing of prose in the regional languages. Then, the translation of Western classics including novels followed. Novels have been published in several Indian languages and also in Indian English. The reciprocal influence between the novel in English and the novel in the regional languages has been significant for the development of both.

Indian literature includes many literatures such as Assemese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Malayalam, Odiya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu etc. When writers write in these languages, their readers are very few and so they are not rewarded with wide recognition. But when these language writings are translated into English, they receive a great deal of admiration from people not only in India but also in the rest of the world. Thus,translations help writers and literatures in many ways. Both the readers and writers benefit a lot from translations. When a writer's work is translated into English, he or she becomes widely known to wide range of readers. Conversely, readers are able to learn the customs and the life style of a particular place and country when they read the writings of the authors belonging to that country .C.R.Reddy in his foreword to K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar's Pioneering book *Indo-Anglian Literature* (1943), writes:

> Indo-Anglian literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature. It is a part of it, a modern facet of that glory which commencing from the *Vedas,* has continued to spread its mellow light, now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history, ever increasingly up to the present time of Tagore, Iqbal and Aurobindo Ghose and bids fair to expand with our and humanity's expanding future.(p3)

Among Indian literatures, Bengali literature received primary appreciation, for it was only in Bengal that the Indian literature Renaissance first manifested itself. The history of the novel in Bengal began with the great Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Many of his novels appeared in translation in many regional languages and his works influenced many novelists all over India. Raj Lakshmi Devi's works also gained people's attention. Like them, Kali Krishna Lahiri, H. Dutt and Khetrapal Chakravarti also tried their hand at novels and other writings. One of the greatest writers of not only Bengal but also of the whole of India and the world was Rabindranath Tagore. TaraSankar Bandyopadhaya, Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyaya, Naini Bhaumik, Gajendrakumar Mitra and ManojBasu, were the ourstanding novelists of Bengal. They have all presented the calm as well as the storm, the surface froth as well as the unplumbed depths of Bengali life in their works.

Not only men novelists of Bengal but also her women novelists enjoy a wide readership, considerable fame and recognition. Among the women novelists in Bengal, one of the most famous is Mahasweta Devi. Her work is like a bright lamp to the poor and the tribals who are living in the dark places without any acquaintance with light.

Born into a well-known artistic family in January 1926 in Dhaka, Mahasweta Devi grew up at a time when the National Movement was at its height. She graduated from Shantiniketan,the brain-child of RabindranathTagore. In 1947, she married the dramatist Bijan Bhattacharya who wrote the famous play *Nabanna*. She joined the postal department as an upper division clerk but lost this job when the new Nationalist government identified her as a communist. Without any feeling of shame or distrust, she did whatever job she could get to make money. In 1962, she divorced Bijan Bhattacharya and married the writer Asit Gupta. As a creative writer, her contribution to literature is very important, for her talent for introducing something new in language has been recognized by critics and readers as a very important contribution to the development of Bengali literature. She is one of the best selling authors of Bengali literature. Her first book *Jhansi Rani*, which is a biography of the powerful ruler of North India who boldly fought against the British rulers in 1857, was published in 1956. As a reward for her efforts, the book gained wide recognition. After *Jhansi Rani,* Mahasweta Devi authored about one hundred fictional works. Among Indian languages, her books have been translated into Hindi, Assamese, Telugu, Marathi, Odiya, Gujarathi etc.Her works have also been translated into English, Italian, Japanese and French. She wrote three novels which won her fame and name. They were: *Kavi Bandyoghoti Gayiner Jivan o Mrityu, Andharmanik* and *Hajar Churrashi Ma.* The main subject of her creative writings has been the poor and the tribals and their struggle. The tribals and the scheduled caste people along with other depressed communities meet many problems in their daily life and they are the focal point of Mahasweta Devi's writings. In an interview with Gayatri Chakravorthy Spivak, Mahasweta Devi stated;

> The tribals and the mainstream have always been parallel. The mainstream simply doesn't understand the parallel. They can't keep their land; there is no education for them, no health facilities. They are denied everything. That is why I started writing about the tribal movement and the tribalworld I repay them their honour. (Stanadayini 95)

With her acute knowledge of what happens beneath the surface, Mahasweta Devi describes their life with brutal accuracy savagely exposing the dominant sections of the society, who have the direct support of the police, politicians and the administration. Mahasweta Devi has been criticized by many as a chronicler of social reality. But after reading her novels, one can feel that this kind of criticism is rather unjustified. She highlights the value of a universal consciousness of exploitation and the strength to protest against it. As Maitreya Ghatak has put it, "She (Mahasweta Devi) holds a mirror to the condition of

the world as we enter the new millennium" (ix).

Mahasweta Devi admires those who raise their voice to protest against wrongs and this is evident in her writings. Whether it is a struggle for political power or more immediate problems, like demands for land, minimum wages, roads, schools, drinking water, share of the crops, for human dignity, all these remain the hallmark of her fiction. About her writings and how they reach over the poor and the tribals, Bandyopadhyay says.

> In1992,I was doing field work in a tribal village in the Medinipur district of West Bengalfor the National Institute of Adult Literacy. The village had just passed through an intensive Literacy.Campaign and the purpose of the research was to see if any reading habit was retained after the campaign was withdrawn. The general complaint was that there was no reading material. In a village, a young tribal boy brought out a book, an abridged version of Mahasweta Devi's *Birsa Munda,* written specifically for young readers. He said that this book was read by every one of his community; it was through this book that they had learnt a lot about Birsa Bhagawan.The boy was a Munda.The book was also translted into the Ho language in Bihar. (Introduction, *Dust on the Road*.xi)

As Mahasweta Devi wanted to do and say many things, that too within a short period of time, she began to feel that fiction itself was not an adequate medium for her. Because of this, she began to write for many newspapers and journals about many topics. Considering this work important in 1982,she resigned his teaching job and joined *Jugantar*, a Bengali newspaper, as a reporter. Because of this, she has had a greater opportunity of travelling around the country and writing for the Weekly columns regularly since then. In 1984, she started writing for the Bengali Daily *Dainik Basumati* In the following years, she joined *Bartaman* another Bengali Daily with a deep penetration in rural areas. Since 1992, she has been writing for another Bengali newspaper *Aajkal.* The newspaper writings have made her a household name among many , gaining wide recognition among all kinds of people. It is said that she has associated herself with a large number of organisations, most of them of 'tribals' and 'untouchables'. These organizations came into being only because of the fact that many basic problems of theirs were taken into account by the government or the political parties as they are more interested in using the people as voting fodder and not in addressing or redressing their problems. Mahasweta Devi describes the suffering of these people and her desire to change their conditions in the lines that follow;

> All the factors that had to the eruption of the Movement remain unchanged. The exploitation of the starving peasants continues unabated. Rural India has the appearance of an enormous graveyard. This movement has been the most significant and inspiring event for a number of decades in this country ……Life is not arithmetic, and man is not made for the game of politics. survival and justice… After thirty-one year of Indipendence, I find my people still groaning under hunger, landlessness, indebtedness, and my passion, directed against a system that has failed to liberate my people from these horrible constraints, is the only source of inspiration for all my writings. (qtd in Introduction to *Five Plays* ix)

Mahasweta Devi firmly believes that unless people unite, assess their own situation, bring pressure on the authorities in a united manner and actively participate in wherever needs to be done, no meaningful change can come about. She was awarded the title of Padmashree normally conferred on distinguished citizens by the Government of India, not for her work as a writer but for her work among these small tribal groups of the Purulia and Medinipur Districts of West Bengal. She presents the condition of these tribals very effectively thus.

> Famine and starvation, death among Kalahandi tribals in Odisha are quite regular, yes Kalahandi is fertile, grows regular crops. Of course, the tribal land has been usurped by non-tribals. During famine, the tribals, government will say, are supplied with rice and wheat. Yet, no one ever made any effort to know the truth about this disjunction between a good harvest and starvation deaths of tribals. For the Kalahandi tribals, …….the staple food is not rice or wheat but according to government jargon, "lesser food grains "like" "Marva, Kurthi, Kodo" etc. Tribal lands gone, they cannot grow what they eat, so they starve. The "Kokku" tribe of Amaravati District of Maharastra are a forest tribe. They were food-gatherers. The rich teak forest, their home, has been depleted" (Devi's *India's Denotified Tribes* 3)

Though Mahasweta Devi writes about the everyday problems and the day-to-day sufferings of the tribal people, she is not the first writer to write about the tribal people in Bengali literature. There is a long tradition of such writing as it is evident from the writings of the great writers like Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay and Satinath Bhaduri. But there is a notable difference between their outlook and that of Mahasweta Devi. In her tribal outlook, life is not romanticized, as her main concern is to expose the strangle hold of feudalism over land and poor people. As Rakasi Kora says, she has "not colored a single sequence or

presented a single falsehood" (Sathyanarayana's *The Plays of Mahasweta Devi* 24). Her sympathetic portrayal aims to capture the pain and torment in the life of the oppressed. Mahesweta Devi is interested not only in the welfare of the tribals but also in the upliftment of women. In many of her writings, she has highlighted the sufferings of women and their sacrifices, for she is aware of the condition of women and their torture by men who use them not as human beings but only as objects to satisfy their sexual desire and as servants for doing the household work. Women in Mahasweta Devi's works often question the validity of the accepted set of values and rebel against the moral codes and social norms denying freedom to individuals. Though they keep silent and bear the tortures of men, at last they express their dissatisfaction towards them, as Sujata does in *Mother* of 1084. They also become equal to men in fighting as Dopodi does in *Draupadi.*

Mahasweta Devi said in an interview as: "I am not a feminist. I consider woman as an integral part of society, and I think that women are equally oppressed as men in the present social set up" (Esha Dey 84). Many of Mahasweta Devi's texts clearly expose this. Her writings often show that in a patriarchal setup women are placed in a position where they are easily exploited not because they are part of society but only because they are 'women'. It is clearly evident from the story of Dopodi in *Draupadi. Old Woman* is a collecton of two stories, "Statue" and "The Fairy Tale of Mohanpur". They are touching and poignant tales because the protagonists in both the stories are old women. Mahasweta Devi is at her best tender in her sensitive, delicately drawn portraits of these two oldwomen. *The Queen of Jhansi* is the first book by Mahasweta Devi which traces the history of growing resistance to the British. The Queen of Jhansi, remains one of India's most important historical figures, a legendary heroine who led her troops against the British in the uprising of 1857, widely described as the first Indian war for Independence. Oral tales and songs are in abundance, glorifying the image of a spirited young woman warrioer who died on the battlefield but tries on in the minds of an entire community. This image of the warrior queen did capture the imagination of Mahesweta Devi who was herself a young woman writer just beginning a career, fascinated by the personality of Lakshmibai of Jhansi. *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* is Mahasweta Devi's important novel which ranges over decades in the life of Chotti in which India moves from Colonial rule to Independence and then to the unrest of the 1970s. "I had but that one arrow", says Chotti Munda , the hero of this epic tale, a 'magic' arrow that stood for the pride, the wisdom and the culture of their society, a society threatened with inevitable disintegration as its traditional structures crumbled under the assault of 'national development'. The

wide sweep of this important novel encompasses many layers by probing and uncovering the complex web of social and economic exchange based on power relations and also tracing the changes, some forced, some welcomed, in the daily lives of a marginalized rural community. This novel is also remarkable for the manner in which it touches on vital issues that have in subsequent decades, grown into matters of urgent social concern. It raises questions about the place of the tribal in the map of national identity, land rights and human rights, the 'museumization' of ethnic cultures, and the justification of violent resistance as the last resort of a desperate people, amongst others. This is the first novel where Mahasweta Devi articulates tribal history.

The Book of Hunter is a charming and expansive novel set in the 16th century Medieval Bengal. Drawing on the life of a great medieval poet's poem *Abhayamangal* better known as *Chandimangal*, it beautifully records the socio-political history of the times. Mahasweta Devi here explores the cultural values of the hunter tribes namely the *Shabars* and how they, living in the forest and its environs, cope with the slow erosion of their way of life, as more and more forest land gets cleared to make way for settlements. In *Outcast and Four Stories* Mahasweta Dei's acute and perceptive pen brings to life with a deep empathy and sensitivity the life stories of four women-Dhouli, Shanichari,Josmina, Chinta-all from the most opressed, marginalised segments of society. Whether it is Dhouli, the young Dusad who finds herself an outcast in her own village, Shanichari, the Oregon girl who is forced into working in the brick-kilns outside Calcutta, Josmina,, the Ho tribal who with her husband, gets sucked into the racket of trade in cheap colie labour, or Chinta, a brahman widow whose caste is no protection against the harsh social structures that force her into working as a part- time maid in Calcutta, the life stories of all these women have one thing in common-.i.e the unending class, caste and gender exploitation which makes their lives a relentless struggle for survival. Mahasweta Devi's acute and perceptive pen makes these women step of the margins of society to live in our minds, impressive in their quiet courage and tenacity, and their will to survive

Sri Sri Ganesh Mahima, one of the famous novels by Mahasweta Devi, presents the true suffering of the poor people, especially women, at the hands of the feudal lords. This novel spells out the feudal oppression of Medini Singh and his son Sri Ganesh. The novelist gives a painful description of men who mortgage their women, labour and also their whole life to these people who are in power and also women who mortgage their bodies as there is no other way to find a livelihood since the feudal lords are powerful. This describes not only the sufferings of women who are poor belonging to the lower class but also the

sufferings of women who are born in upper classes. Thus, Mahasweta Devi is an activist writer and social worker.In appreciation of her literary achievement and social responsibility, She has received several awards including the **Lila Award** (1978)**the Amrita Bazar Award** (1967)) **the Tara Sankar Award**, She was also awarded the Padamashree title in 1986 and the **Deshikottama** in 1999. In brief, it may be said that Maheswta Devi may be seen to be a conscientious and committed writer exposing the cause of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalised and women. Through her writings, she has the power of moving the readers to a monumental rage against all forms of exploitation in life. She may be labelled as the champion of the oppressed and the conscience-keeper of society at large. ■

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Aurobindonian Echoes in Paulo Coelho's *Eleven Minutes* and *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*

Sarani Ghosal (Mondal)

Paulo Coelho (1947) is a mystic story teller in the postmodern literary scene. In spite of hailing from a catholic country, Rio De Janerio, he sometimes comes very close to Sri Aurobindo in his approach to life. For Coelho, life is a pilgrimage towards the Infinite through suffering, betrayal, love and joy. In an interview with Juan Arias, an eminent writer and journalist of Spain in July, 1998, Coelho says that as a pilgrim, he travels an endless path: "……it is the path and the search that forge and change you. I keep searching" (P.29). This motif of quest, which is a dominant image in the writings of Tagore, Whitman and Sri Aurobindo, is also obvious in Coelho. This theme of quest is a mystic element, which binds these four writers in the same thread. The present paper attempts to trace Aurobindonian elements in Coelho's fictions with special reference to *Eleven Minutes* and *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept.*

Eleven Minutes (2003) is the fictional biography of a Brazilian Prostitute called Sonia, whom the author had met in Zurich in 2000 (P. 274). In the novel, the author changes Sonia into Maria and explores her varied experiences sensitively, whereas in *By the River Piedra* (1994) the focus is on Pilar and her childhood sweet heart, the monk. Like Maria, Pilar is also an independent and strong woman, who too learns the lessons of life through varied experiences of pain, joy and hardships. Both the female protagonists know how to bury their personal feelings deep in the psyche and to face the world with courage and smile. Their journey starts in Brazil and continues in different provinces of Latin America. They undertake this arduous journey to search

for true love and pure joy or what Sri Aurobindo calls "Ananda". Both Maria and Pilar dream of selfless love and existence. Towards the close, we observe that love helps them discover themselves and they find a meaningful existence through love. Both of them express Aurobindoian thoughts and quite often come close to Sri Aurobindo's heroine Savitri as seen in his blank verse epic *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (1950-51). Like Maria and Pilar, Savitri is also a very strong and determined woman. She undertake a cosmic journey in Time to get back her husband Satyavan from the clutch of Yama or Death. Here we find that "Love" is the driving force behind these three female protagonists. Love is not an ordinary virtue for Sri Aurobindo and Coelho. Love is synonymous with surrender. It helps to erase our ego and liberates the self from meanness and contraction. Maria, though a prostitute by profession, is very much aware of the finer elements of life and she deliberately keeps her inner being away from the baser aspects like physical gratification and carnality. The names are also symbolic. Maria is mother Mary in *Vulgate*. Savitri is the daughter of light symbolising Divine Grace of World Mother. Again, Pilar herself is a symbol of love and surrender. "True love is an act of total surrender". (*By the River,* IX, Author's note).

In Book V, Canto II of *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo says that love is a power and a glory from eternity and it tries to realise the underlying unity in all. Both Maria and Pilar connect themselves with the world through love and sympathy. The monk too believes in the principles of love and cosmic consciousness. However, the monk is in a dilemma whether to accept family life or be in celibacy. The monk and Pilar move from one place to another but they are unsure of their deepest feelings for each other. The monk's conflict grows intense towards the close of the novel. He wrestles with his own self: whether to follow the rules of the seminary or to break away from it as he is in love with Pilar. But he fails to express that. The author has beautifully expressed the monk's inner conflict through the image of "breaking the glass". The duo is having wine at a restaurant, when Pilar asks him to break the glass of wine.

> Break the glass please – and free us from all these damned rules ……. from doing only what others approve of. (*By the River,* 170)

Finally, the monk realize the significance of integral life, which means the acceptance of life as a whole. He says:

> We'll buy a House, I'll get a job, and I'll serve God as Saint Joseph did, with humility of an anonymous person. (*By the River,* 194)

Here we see that his ego is finally shattered. He wishes to serve God as a

common man without the glory of monkhood. It is love of Pilar that helps him come out of his ego sense. In the Epilogue, the monk talks of taking a journey together and his stress is on "Our Path". He realizes that without the presence of his ladylove, his *Yoga* (Union with the Divine) will not be successful. Sri Aurobindo too is against an ascetic life, believing in the principle of integral life. According to his a monk's life is incomplete. A *rishi* lives a complete life by embracing both matter and spirit. Marriage and offspring give one totality of existence. A monk is deprived of that. The rejection of material life is a rejection of God. For Sri Aurobindo, "Matter is secret God". *The Life Divine*, 844) Coelho echoes this Aurobindonian principle of intergral life through Maria and Pilar. Time and again Pilar tells the monk, "There are many ways to serve God". (*By the River,* 186). This *Rishi* cult is a key element in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, who does not reject the world because he wishes to taste all the flavours of life to go beyond them in search of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo also indicates a collaboration of man and woman on the path to perfection. Man is complimentary to woman in the path of spiritual practice. The woman is not an outcaste in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. In Canto IV of *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo writes:

> This whole wide world is only he and she……
> The Two who are one are the secret of all power
> The Two who are one are the might and fight in things
> (Canto IV : *The Secret Knowledge*, 63)

This relates to the *Tantrik* cult of Oriental scriptures. In *Tantra* the World-Mother is worshipped as *Shakti*, who helps humanity to link man to God. In Coelho's fictions, we see that he considers his female protagonists as women of immense potentials and possibilities. For Sri Aurobindo, *Tantra* means to elevate woman as an object of profound respect and of worship. (SABCL, 18, 627). In Coelho, the woman often gets the central role, not just as a glorification of feminism, but from an obviously spiritual standpoint. Like Savitri, Maria and Pilar not only transform themselves but also seek to transform their male counterparts. *Tantrik* tradition takes the whole person into account. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo and Coelho deal with the whole person. It is a world-embracing principle. Both of them believe that the women will hae the superior role to play in the future. Coelho says to Juan Arias:

> I too, am sure that his century will be affected by the greater presence of women in society. Man is finishing this century with a larger identity crises than woman…. (*Confessions*, 84)

Sri Aurobindo expresses the same feeling in *Harmony of Virtue* that women will be equal to men and may even become superior. Both of them speak like

that because they are mother-worshippers like Ramakrishna. To them the great Feminine is the link between the Earth and the Heaven The monk after his realization tells Pillar:

> One night I awoke, and my room was completely bright. I saw the face of the Great Mother, I saw her loving look. (*By the River,* 189)

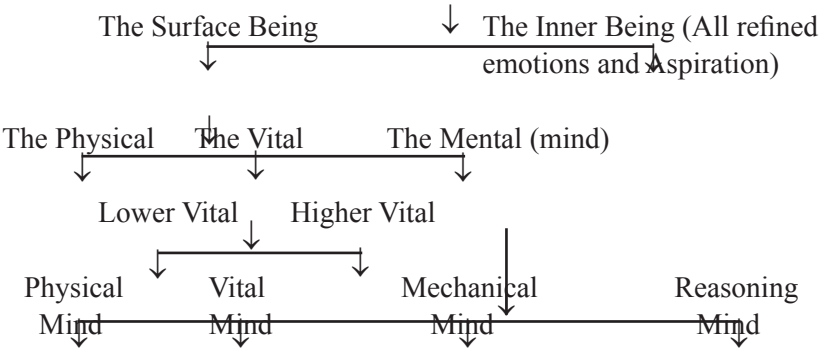
The image of world Mother appears again and again in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and Paulo Coelho in different names. The world mother is "Lady of the Voyage" to Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* and she becomes the "Lady of the Grace" in Coelho's *By the River Piedra.*

In the interview with Juan Arias, Paulo Coelho confesses that Hare Krishna cult, Buddhism and Yogic Philosophy have worked as formative influences on him (*Confessions,* 34) Checking his texts one suspects Sri Aurobindo's Yoga was a strong influence on him. Apart from the themes of love, journey, integral life and mother worship, the issue of human personality is also a matter of great importance to both of them. Time and again Sri Aurobindo says in his major texts like *The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga* and *Savitri* that man is a multiple being. And inside man and woman lies a latent aspiration for the Supreme Being, the Divine. This is quite apt for Maria in *Eleven Minutes.* Maria, who turns a prostitute in the novel, has exceptional virtues even if she apparently leads a bad life for money. Sri Aurobindo has specifically pointed out that the physical being may be distorted but the psychic aspiration may not be affected by the wrong movements of the physical or the vital, the surface layers of human consciousness. Maria earns money by selling her body, but at her leisure, she expresses her best self, the psychic being, in her diaries. Through the dark days of her prostitution, Maria searches for true love that lies beyond sex and physicality. Let us listen to one of her diary entries: "I am two women : one wants to have all the joy, passion and adventure that life can give me. The other wants to be a slave to routine, to family life…. I am a house-wife and a prostitute, both of us living in the same body and doing battle with each other. The meeting of these two women is a game with serious risks. A divine dance. When we meet ……two universes colliding". (*Eleven Minutes,* 153) The image of battle or collision between two selves indicates Maria's inner conflict. Maria can be seen from two viewpoints, from the feminist standpoint and from the point of view of a human being realizing her role to be played in the mundane set up. The dual selves of Maria run parallel in the novel as her diary entries project her consciousness. The dairy shows the journey of the soul towards self-discovery. Through experiences and obstructions, Maria realizes her aspiration, her own "inner light" and the possibility of sacred sex

in the context of love. This love is above gratification and carnality. In her dark days of prostitution, every night Maria analyses herself or inner being in her diary and also tries to find out the objective of her existence. "I can choose either to be victim of the world or adventurer in Search of treasure". (*Eleven Minutes,* 39)

This image of "treasure" is the spark of the Divine. She aspires to be an adventurer in search of the divine. This is her mystic quest, which does not allow her to be restful and complacent. Her inner conflict reminds us of Blake's philosophy that contrary is the condition of progress. Blake had spoken of it in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* Experiences, sufferings, contraries and obstructions give humanity a strong sense of life, with which one can progress further in the path towards the Infinite. In Maria, this latent aspiration is a sacred fire burning in her all the time alongside her sensuous life and the feminine quest of security. If we analyse this duality of selves in the context of Sri Aurobindo, we find that the Indian Master has divided a being in three segments. According to him, our being is not composed of one unit, but composed of many entities lurking behind the apparent single one.

Human Being



The surface being or personality comprises three parts – physical, vital and mental. The physical part tries to maintain good health. Then comes the "vital". The vital is a force, which makes our physical instruments work normally. The physical instruments are glands, veins, arteries, nerves, plexuses, and so on. The vital or life-force works as *Vayu* or subtle air principle in the body and if it deserts the body, the vital the latter perishes. Along with the proper functioning of the body, is also the source of diverse energies that a body requires. Anger, Greed, Vanity, Jealousy, and Lust are some adverse passions creating negative energy in the body, whereas superior variety of energy nourishes aspiration

and our efforts towards meditation, concentration as well as receptivity to inspiration. In this context, we can divide vital of life force in two segments: higher and lower, the higher vital deals with loftier emotions, kindness, sympathy and altruism, whereas the lower vital deals with desires, cravings and emotional disturbances. Sri Aurodbindo suggests that if the vital is kept under control, humanity is then free from decay and diseases. Then there is mind with its four subdivisions: physical mind, vital mind, mechanical mind and reasoning mind. The physical mind responds to all the physical needs and sense-perceptions. The vital mind is influenced by the lower and higher vital. This mind articulates in words our desires and emotions. The vital mind also possesses a strong power of imagination. The mechanical mind allows making old habitual thoughts recur. Often we shadow-box with ourselves repeatedly over an issue happened in the past. This is an activity of mechanical mind. This mind is very brooding. The reasoning mind discriminates everything in terms of reason like what should be done and what should not be done.

Let us now discuss the inner being or the subliminal being of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. It is more powerful than the outer being. "Swami Vivekananda had compared our outer lives with floating iceberg-nine-tenth submerged underwater and one – tenth above" (*Man – A Multiple Personality,* 23). The inner being is also divided into sub-categories by Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine* but I am not going into the details of those divisions in the present study. The inner being carries all the refined emotions like selflessness. Selfishness is not the part of inner being. Behind our outer and inner being stands the "psychic being".

According to Sri Aurobindo the psychic being at its origin is only a spark of the divine consciousness and it is through successive lives that it builds up a conscious individuality. Therefore, it is in the making. It takes the full shape through our progressive evolution. The *Upanishads* describe it as the *Purusha,* who is seated in the midst of our self and is no longer than the finger of a man; He is the Lord of what was and what shall be… He is like a blazing fire….. Its seat is just behind the heart". (*Man – A Multiple Personality,* 40). The awakening of the psychic being is essential in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, when the psychic is awakened, a man or a woman gets rid of vital motives and is capable of surrender at the feet of the Divine. The Ego too is subdued with the awakening of the psychic. Coelho's Maria is a multiple being in the context of Sri Aurobindo. She wavers from the surface being to the inner being and then to the psychic being. Her surface being enjoys money and sensual pleasure but her inner being carries the sacred flame of aspiration leading towards the opening of the psychic. Here I cite two of her diary entries to show her wavering

nature from the surface layer of consciousness to kind of refinement.

> It hurt when I lost each of the various men I fell in love with. Now, though, I am convinced that no one loses anyone, because no one owns anyone. That is the true experience of freedom: having the most important thing in the world without owning it. (*Eleven Minutes,* 92)
>
> Here, in my diary, I am aware that there are certain phrases which are not written by me, but by a woman full of "light", I am that woman though I refuse to accept it. (*Eleven Minutes,* 114)

Similar examples abound in the text highlighting her contradictory selves. At one place, she writes; "when desire is still in this pure state, the man and woman fall in love with life, they live each moment reverently, consciously, always ready to celebrate the next blessing". (*Eleven Minutes,* 135) When Maria talks of "Purity" in desire, it obviously comes from her inner being. In course of her low career, she finds Ralf, the painter and for the first time in her life she feels freedom through love. "When I stopped being who I am I found myself". (*Eleven Minutes,* 191) Her ego is now softened. She surrenders her surface being to live consciously. "Freedom from ego" indicates the opening of the psychic. Sri Aurobindo in his essays and letters says that this sacred aspiration that once rises in a being can never go to sleep again. It is interesting to observe that Paulo Coelho projects this Aurobindonian concept of man as a multiple being in a woman. In spite of being a prostitute she yearns to purify her life so that it becomes a living demonstration of the divine in her life. Both in Sri Aurobindo and Paulo Coelho, we find that women manifest their power and consciousness in different ways and they are viewed as *Shakti*, the power behind men. (*A Critical Response to Indian English Literature,* 27)

Jung too speaks of the problem of opposites, of good and evil of mind and matter, of light and darkness. It is *Dvandva* in Sanskrit that includes individuals' experience of opposites. In a letter written to his friend, V.Subrahamanya lyer, Jung writes the impossibility of getting beyond the pairs of opposites in this life. Harold Coward quotes a portion of Jung's letter to V.S. Iyer:

> It is certainly desirable to liberate oneself from the operation of the opposite but one can only do it to a certain extent, because no sooner do you get out of the conflict then you get out life altogether … It can be the construction of a consciousness just beyond the opposites. Your head may be liberated, your feet remain entangled. Complete liberation means death. (*Jung and Eastern Thought*, 16),

In reply, V.S. lyer refers to the highest level of consciousness without ego. Jung in turn says that he is afraid "this supreme consciousness is at least not one we

could possess." Here we see that Jung was not aware of the fact that ultimately the opposite or contradictory emotions get dissolved in our realization of oneness of *Brahman* consciousness. This Oneness or the Emersonian Oversoul is Coelho's "inner light" or Sri Aurobindo's the image of Divine. Jung had the mission of man as a multiple personality, but he did not have a clue to dissection the personality of man in the Aurobindonian way. For Jung getting out of the contradiction means death. For Sri Aurobindo and Coelho, the contradiction is the way to discover the divine spark in us. ■

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Siddhartha - Hesse's Exposition of Ascetism, Sensuality and Salvation

Narayan Panda

Siddharthaa is the internationally acclaimed literary creation of Herman Hesse. It was the culmination of Hesse's rigorously consistent perusal of Indian thought and culture especially Buddha's speeches. The explicit impact of the *Upanishads* is writ large in the work. The concept of cyclic birth and rebirth in Hindu as well as Buddhist thought and relentless bid for the emancipation from such mundane manifestation is the raison-de-etre of *Siddhartha.* Through thread bare analysis by way of going through the German translation of Indian works, Hesse exhibited his perspicacity in the selection of the terminologies like *Atman* for soul, *Om* for supreme reality; *Samsara* for the vortex of birth and death and *Nirvana* for extirpation from it. Though born and brought up by Christian priests, Hesse rose above the restraints and limitations of parental impact and influence of ambience to present the oriental thought with appreciable precision. That earned him the acclaim of the eastern world thick and fast. The Indian tale in the presentation of Hesse is a curious combination of Hesse's time-honoured romance with Indian philosophical elements.

Siddhartha is an intellectual biographical sketch that explores the source of self permeating the self. The Brahmin scion Siddhartha imbued with the intoxication for the spiritual quest relinquishes home and shatters the chord of parental attachment. The wanderer ascetic Siddhartha attains transcendent insight on the bank of the mythical river.

The sketch Siddhartha in the depiction of Hesse does not display any novelistic leaning. It can be viewed as bi-pronged. One can be viewed in biographical terminology and the other in textual consistency and both are inextricably interwoven that culminates in conspicuous cohesion.

Hesse dwelt upon his master-piece *Siddhartha* chiefly relying on his accumulation of experience, contemplation and inclination towards asceticism that was in keeping with inquisitive young Siddhartha hunting desperately for enlightenment. As long as the facet of transcendental tendency prevailed in the progress of writing, it was well and good; the progress was slow and steady and surely striding in the direction of success. As soon as Hesse switched over to Siddhartha's triumphant aspect, the progress came to a grinding halt. He miserably failed to conceptualize a character who could have got the better of the surrounding odds and obstacles, troubles and tribulations, prejudices and predilections. Hesse was passionately hinged on the task of carrying on the continuance of Siddhartha for which he was eager to get rid of his mental depression and for that matter undertook psychoanalysis with C.G. Jung. In the long run, C.G. Jung's effort yielded positive results. The opportunities of meeting Wilhelm Gundert, a Tokyo based missionary, went a long way in refreshing Hesse's memory about eastern philosophy in the context of Siddhartha. That helped him to pick up momentum to grant a symmetrical flow to his master-piece.

After the completion of the first part of *Siddhartha*, it was brought out and dedicated to Romain Rolland, the French peace herald. So far as the second part of the book is concerned, the four chapters in the beginning reflect Hesse's concerns about the contemporary political atmosphere and the reverberation for emancipation from the cataclysmic war: Siddhartha, the hero is found toiling and moiling for exploring the wholeness in ascetic pursuit. Thus the chapters meander away dealing with political and philosophical questions. The second part makes for a psychologically and mythically precipitated presentation. Taken as a whole the two parts project a crystal-clear way to decipher the philosophy of life of Siddhartha from the beginning to end.

Broadly speaking, *Siddhartha* in the first three chapters depicts the hero with his parents; he decides to shatter worldly bondage and flanked by his friend Govinda he meet the Samanas. Unconvinced, he met Gautama Buddha together with his companion Govinda. Feeling his intellectual query unresponded to, he detaches himself where as Govinda stays with Gautama Buddha estranged from Siddhartha. In the subsequent three chapters, the awakening dawns with the arrival of the pedant on the bank of the mythical river where he crosses it to drown himself, head and shoulders in the world of senses, by falling in love with the ravishingly beautiful courtesan Kamala, and by acquiring bountiful abundance in collaboration with the merchant Kamaswami. In the third segment of the three chapters, Siddhartha discards the world of senses and luxury and lastly he finds solace in the company of the ferryman Vasudeva.

In the concluding chapters from X to XII, the dialectic of Siddhartha is quite clearly discernible. Kamala finds out the will-o-the wisp of life and the disillusionment makes her realize the super-fluity and hollowness of life. Characteristically she lets loose her singing bird from the golden cage. The symbolic deliverance prognosticates her march in search of the transcendental- she takes her son begotten from Siddhartha and embarks on the journey in the search of Gautama Buddha, the enlightened one in a bid to attain salvation. Her journey ends in catharsis; she arrives at Vasudeva's, introduces the son to Siddhartha whereby she realizes her release from the bondage was attained; she dies from a snake bite.

Siddhartha attains still a facet of unrealized enlightenment with the passing away of Kamala, the courtesan with whom he spent his concupiscent phase. He becomes inextricably interwoven with the son by filial love. When one day he leaves him surreptitiously for the city, it dawns upon the horizon of Siddhartha's thought how eternal confrontation and conciliation was true in the flight away from *Samsara* in search of asceticism and feeling attracted to illusive charms for his son.

The characters in *Siddhartha* constitute a corollary triumvirate, pervading as well as permeating each other. Govinda, Siddhartha's friend from infancy gives up home along with his companion in the quest of eternal bliss, but paradoxically, he stays back when Siddhartha leaves him far behind and acquires knowledge and experiences as time brings him in due course. Govinda rises above the exigencies to play the role of preceptor as well as pupil to Siddhartha. Kamala plays the unique role of inciting sensuality thereby initiating him into love and sex; she proves indispensable in allowing Siddhartha's experience to become full-fledged in the *Samsara*. Her pursuit of salvation through Gautama Buddha, the enlightened one, quite aptly portrays contradiction- *Samsara* and *Nirvana* or rather sense and spirit.

It won't be an exaggeration to take both Govinda and Kamala as symbolizing soul and body. Once while asleep in Vasudeva's dwelling, Siddhartha sees Govinda in the garb of a Buddhist, in a melancholic look at his estrangement. In bewilderment of gay abandon of intimacy and affability, Siddhartha embraced his friend, but Govinda changed into a woman exulting with delicate youth. Siddhartha lay on her breast and went on sucking from it. What adorns Hesse's work with brisk, vibrating charisma is the assemblage of Govinda, Kamala and Siddhartha. While Siddhartha traverses into the world of *Samsara*, Govinda is lost in the spiritual aldorado and Kamala finds obsessed in the kingdom of sensuality. The induction of hermaphroditic imagery makes the

book subtle and proves the ingenuity of the imagery. Hesse as a writer stands at par excellence, through this unique work he has created.

The illusory river in the master-piece figures prominently in so far as it segregates and integrates *Samsara* and *Nirvana* for Siddhartha when he crosses it at the outset and later on moves towards the Catharsis. The illusory river aptly reflects the synchronism of fusion and fluctuation. Vasudeva, the ferry-man, a conspicuous character, appears the prominent persuader to make Siddhartha realize the modus operandi of the two truths and live in a spirit of recognition of the never-ending flow of time. The remarkability of the scene is heightened when the old and emaciated Vasudeva quits Siddhartha also in the twilight days of life and Siddhartha overwhelmed with emotion, invokes upon Govinda to endow him with both the roles of his and Vasudeva's.

Taken aback and with profound love and adoration, Govinda kissed Siddhartha's forehead as if infused with clairvoyance while he was still not very sure about Siddhartha's bidding and about *Samsara* and *Nirvana*. In Govinda's view, the troubles and tribulations, odds and obstacles, the horrors and hazards of the *Samsara* reverberate revealingly in the mask of Siddhartha's bright, beaming and smiling face. Govinda could discover in his inward eye it was none other than Gautama's serene countenance. Govinda felt Siddhartha's smile was the verisimilitude, unmistably exact; most certainly tender, delicate as Gautama Buddha's. In hallucination, Govinda was oblivious of the flow of time, of himself, and of Siddhartha or Gautama Buddha. He stood transfixed bending over taciturn Siddhartha's face, which had seemed to be the magic, almost the miracle of all formations.

The fourth figure Gautama Buddha is manifested in the novel towards the fag-end, but prevailed and permeated all the while by which the important implications of the novel is heightened to a crescendo. His clandestine presence is perceived althrough the work. The elucidation of the writer portrays Siddhartha's life very often akin to and again as a deviation from Gautama Buddha's off and on. Personal epitomes in case of both are strangely veri-similitude at many points: the name Siddhartha coincides as one of Buddha's names. The character coined by Hesse i.e. Siddhartha, the orthodox priest's son, was born and brought up in keeping with the Brhminic rituals and norms in closely conserved ambience, but leaves the parental home in the quest of supreme knowledge. In much the same way, disgusted and exasperated with the princely exuberance of the palace, Buddha quits home. Buddha as well as Siddhartha, the Brahmin, renounced the worldly bondage to explore the real meaning of life. Both of them had their wife and son whom they abandoned

to delve deep into the life of poverty, privations, unmitigated self-imposed suffering and hardship. Siddhartha as in case of Gautama Buddha took resort to austerities and meditation on the bank of a river to attain enlightenment. The novel attains a peak in the succession of sequences when Siddhartha calls on Gautama Buddha, and Siddhartha shrinks almost at the point of taking refuge in Buddha's cult. During the course of threadbare discussion, Siddhartha was disillusioned of Buddha as the former thought the latter's doctrine of salvation was disparagingly devastating to the "World of unity" and hence parted from him, but Govinda preferred Buddhism and remained with Gautama Buddha.

Gautama Buddha and Siddhartha were parallel in their beginning as both felt to give up the mundane existence and join those who renounce indulgence in the sense. Succeedingly Siddhartha decides to adopt the life of worldly enjoyment by joining with the "child people"; he had sex with Kamala; he made friendship with Kamaswami for social and economical affluence. In conclusion, Siddhartha was in the state of vacillation: neither outright indulgence in the ascetic life nor adopting a full-fledged conjugal life. By coming in contact and camaraderie of the ferryman Vasudeva, he worked as a sentinel of connecting link between the worldly life and asceticism.

It won't be a misnomer to say Siddhartha approximates Buddha at the outset, but meanders away in separate direction later on. In Hesse's enigma to put up Buddha and Siddhartha at arm's length, he also indulges in subtleties and adroitness in making both the figures both sides of the same coin. The jugglery of depiction and aptness of presentation makes both of them a single identity; nevertheless segregating them as different personifications.

Govinda, Kamala and Vasudeva bear the brunt of fusion and dichotomy between Gautama Buddha and Siddhartha. Siddhartha's disagreements with Gautama Buddha, so far as the tenets of Buddhism are concerned, consist in the fact that their identities are similar. Thus the theme of the novel *Siddhartha* in the interplay of the personalities of both is imbued with extraordinary complexities in dimension. It is a subtle attempt at getting the better of "Dualism" from religious and philosophical point of view as well as a means of establishing rapport between the oriental concept of philosophy in religion and western awareness and idiosyncrasies. The affinity between the characters is the result of Hesse's deep insight into Indian tradition and mythologies. In the *Bhagwat Gita*, Govinda was the charioteer of the warrior Arjuna who explains to the latter the intricacies of philosophy of life. In Hesse's work, Siddhartha played the role of teaching Govinda the philosophy of life; Hesse planned the reversal of two roles for certain well-considered special effect. Vasudeva and Govinda

could be decided look-alikes. Siddhartha to Govinda is as Vasudev to Arjuna in *Bhagwat Gita*, the right way. The ingenuity of Hesse's scheme becomes apparent in the exchange of roles of characters projected in the master-piece.

In modern fiction writing, *Siddhartha* has its place of extraordinary importance for the presentation of thoughts streamlined by unique action. It depicts the world as an esoteric scene and uses multifarious themes from oriental sources. The scenes, the landscapes and the characters are intertwined under a unique plan so as to achieve effective synchronizations like poetic visions. It is an admixture of 19th century romanticism and symbolistic analysis. Gautama Buddha's concept of salvation is spiritual experience which can only be acquired through strict discipline in a self-less living.

The impact of *Siddhartha* in winning over the sensitivity of readers all over the world is the testimony to its acknowledgement as a great work. The torpsy-turvy in Hesse's perspicacity is quite evident in his leaning towards romanticism as it was natural for any conventional writer before 1916. Hesse was apt to harness Indian and Chinese ideas, myths, philosophical concepts and practices in a bid to reach the dizzy heights. It is undeniably admitted that *Siddhartha* has stood the taste of times and penetrated inaccessible horizons of both the east and the west.

Umpteen Chinese and Indian critics and analysts have been deeply influenced by *Siddhartha*. The contemporary literary luminaries like Romain Rolland, Georges Duhamel, Bertrand Russel have appreciated *Siddhartha* as a unique work born of perspicacity of the genius of Hesse. ■

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Beyond Expressionism: Reading Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* as a Postmodern Metatheatre

Antara Choudhury

The American dramatist Elmer Rice's (1892-1967) play *The Adding Machine* (1923) is a poignant satire of the alienation of common man in the machine-dominated capitalist system. It also depicts the spiritual malaise of man in confrontation with the dystopic vision of life. One of the forerunners among the American expressionist plays, it presents on stage the "experience of an individual standing alone and afraid in an industrial, technological, and urban society which is disintegrating into chaos." (*Glossary* 85) However, this paper will attempt to read the play from the perspective of self-reflexivity which is an important facet of postmodernism. Self-reflexive theatre or "metatheatre" has been coined by Lionel Abel in his book *Metatheatre* (1963). In this type of play, dramatic performance reflects itself as theatre and not merely a slice of life dramatized on stage. There are techniques such as abruptly baring the linguistic and stage devices, deliberate shocking effect implied at the audience, the characters being self-conscious of their status as both character and actor, the action has the quality of a dream, closure or ending is usually subverted. Richard Hornby in his book *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* (1986), has given play-within-a-play, ceremony-within-the-play, role playing within the role, literary and real-life reference and self-reference as probable techniques for creating the ambience of metatheatre.

It also needs to be seen whether certain other aspects of the play correspond with that of postmodernism. For instance, postmodernism celebrates indeterminacy, playfulness and defies closure (a phenomenon known as anti-totalisation) as reflected in many metafictional works. According to Jacques

Derrida,

> Closure is the circular limit within which the repetition of difference infinitely repeats itself. That is to say, closure is its playful space. This movement is the movement of the world as play. *(Writing* 250)

Postmodern works are also obsessed with blending with popular culture which is again a self-referential move to reveal its fictional base. Morever, as Kerstin Schmidt argues they are "frequently been challenged with methodological plagiarism" (*Transformation* 21), which means postmodern drama is inherently intertextual. Also, parody which is used in metatheatre is considered by Linda Hutcheon as "the perfect postmodern form" (*Poetics* 11). Postmodern works at times seem to present "non-teleological dramatic happenings" (*Postmodernism* 81), that is, events which appear to have no motive other than the spectacle itself. Their inconclusive endings reflects what Tim Woods in *Beginning Postmodernism* says about theatre that, "Texts are treated as possessing an infinite openness to significance and a space for the perpetual deferment of conclusive meaning" (81). This in a way leave the audience with plurality of meanings and interpretations as to why things happen as they happen.

I

Deanna M. Toten Beard has categorised the play under the genre "American experimentalism" (54). The play bears an intertextual reference to the German expressionist playwright Georg Kaiser's play *From Morn to Midnight* (1912) in which the protagonist, the 'Cashier' can be thought of as a direct or indirect inspiration for Mr. Zero, the protagonist of this play. Since either direct or indirect reference to an earlier text dismantles the immediate attachment of the audience with the character, this intertextuality reflects the issue of postmodernism.

Frequent recourse to popular culture dissolves the barrier of the fourth wall between the spectator and the stage. Morever, it illustrates the unoriginal nature of presenting fiction on the stage. For instance, Mrs Zero's invocation of the names of real life Hollywood movies such as *For Love's Sweet Sake, Sea-Sick, A Mother's Tears* starring Grace Darling and *The Price of Virtue* in which the big cabaret scene is cut out brings to the fore the latent divide between fact and fiction. While referring to the American actress Grace Darling (1893-1963), that her real name is Elizabeth Dugan and that the paparazzi surrounding her may or may not be true, Mrs. Zero utters something crucial, "You can't believe all you read" (100). This statement in a way reflects the anti-representational nature of the play.

In a different manner, Daisy's mention of the Hollywood film *The Devil's Alibi* and film actor Pauline Frederick (1883-1938) illustrates another kind of significance. She fantasizes diverse acts (from the act of kissing to the act of suicide) by watching these movies. As Julia A. Walker remarks in the essay "Elmer Rice and cinematic imagination,"

> What he seems to be saying here is that the stories lifted from these films were never original to begin with. Even when these films were first released, they were already hackneyed and stale. What is worse is that film audiences not only are moved by them but substitute them for their own emotional lives…In borrowing or alluding to plots that are so recognizably unoriginal, then, Rice would seem to be suggesting that his characters' lives are similarly not original; that they think they are is what makes them pitiable and ridiculous. (*Expressionism* 164)

Daisy who hated the smell of gas and was afraid to ask for carbolic acid or poison, fantasized suicide as glamorous having seen Pauline Frederick do it in the movies. The fact that Daisy could imitate from movies such a serious act as suicide, at one level, trivializes the act. On another level, the spectator will gain the understanding that blindly following stage action can be disastrous and hence, the distancing effect.

Furthermore, the character Shrdlu mentions reading the book *Treasure Island* (117) which he describes as a "profane" book. Later, he mentions the presence of the writers "Dean Swift" and "Abbe Rabelais" in the Elysian Fields, who are again described by him as,

> They are both much admired for some indecent tales which they have written.(124)

The citation of these names ironically refer to his own self who led a puritanic life but inwardly suffered from the guilt of Oedipus complex and who on an unknowing impulse committed matricide because Dr. Amaranth was interrupting between him and his mother. This approach of the presence of real texts- within-texts instills the sense that all texts are inter-related to each other and not to life.

It should be a curious and paradoxical premise to argue if the expressionist technique itself can be subsumed under any postulate of metatheatre. Infact, it needs to be detected if it has any quality similar to metatheatrical devices. On the occasion of the original Theatre guild production, when asked what expressionism was, Elmer Rice had replied,

> It attempts to go beyond mere representation and to arrive at

> interpretation. The author attempts not as much to depict events faithfully as to convey to the spectator what seems to be their inner significance. To achieve this end, the dramatist often finds it expedient to depart entirely from objective reality and to employ symbols, condensations and a dozen devices which to the conservative must seem arbitrarily fantastic. ("Introduction" 97-98)

In this play, the method of presentation of the subjective understanding of subjective reality is typically unreal. For instance, Zero's life does not end with his execution after murdering his boss. The last three scenes take place in Zero's afterlife (in the graveyard, in Elysian Fields and in a cosmic soul repair shop) and these disconnected occurrences can be interpreted to have happened in a dream. So, encapsulated by an aura of a virtual dreamscape, these episodic scenes of *The Adding Machine* are preponderant with rich exaggerated language and distorted visual representations as happens in a dream. It thus depicts the illogical and impulsive happenings in both the terrestrial and celestial realms of existence.

Dumb show or pantomime have the potential to deflect audience from illusion since inability to comprehend most of the time leads to misunderstanding and shock. Unlike realistic theatre which is easily graspable, this dumb show inherently aspire to create absurd parody. It is also the episode in which the critique of the internal audience on the stage unravel the absurdity of the fate of modern man. For instance, when Mr Zero (while he was nonchalantly consuming food) is exhibited as a caged animal for the entertainment of the tourists, the guide introduces him as,

> This, ladies and gentlemen, is a very in-ter-est-in' specimen — the North American murderer, genus home sapiens, Habitat North America. (111)

The spontaneous reaction of "the tall lady" among the spectators comes out singularly as subjecting the irrational element in the sequence. After the initial introduction, she exclaims,

> Oh, how interesting! (111)

After the guide mentions how Zero was captivated after murdering his boss, she exclaims,

> Oh, how charming! (111)

After the guide tells them that he is going to be executed that noon, she exclaims,

> Oh, how lovely! (111)

And after the guide reasons that knife and fork is not allowed to Zero because

he might attempt suicide, she exclaims,

Oh, how fascinating! (111)

This scene, by demonstrating the emotional outburst of an internal spectator breaches the divide between the stage and real spectators who are encouraged to speculate on their own thinking and reaction. Morever, the scene recalls Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) where the trivial gesturing of a man speaking on the telephone behind a glass partition is described. From outside, people can only see his senseless movements and think, why is the person alive and this feeling of absurdity is also reflected in the tall lady's inhumanity towards Zero.

In this play, a peculiar trait of the characters is that they describe each other. It is by similar behaviour that their self-conscious nature gets reflected. First of all, if it is considered what's in a name, in this case, the names of the characters are bound to shake the concentration of the audience. Though it is comprehensible that the names of the couples such as Mr and Mrs Zero, likewise, the Ones, Twos, Threes, Fours, Fives, Sixes etc. are meant to reinvigorate the performance of adding figures which is the job of both Zero and the adding machine, simply naming them in this manner makes them beyond normal human beings. These names, pose a threat to the audience who are unable to recognize them as one of their own.

Furthermore, the name 'Shrdlu' is quite unique in the American scenario. Everybody will be curious if there is any verbal significance behind the name. As Professor Jean Collette observed in a 1953 letter to Rice, "Shrdlu" is the sequence of keys on the second line of a linotype machine (comparable to "qwerty", for example, on a computer keyboard today). This suggests that he represents an arbitrary and therefore meaningless order, particularly the conventional moral order. Like Zero, he has committed a horrible crime. Shrdlu, then represents an order that is merely meaningless in letters or even combinations of letters.

Despite the fact that these names depict the loss of individuality, the lifestyle of these people are monotonously alike. Much like Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot,* Zero has been ceaselessly adding figures since twenty five years and Mrs. Zero has been nagging about drudging in household chores. The characters are also tediously alike as we see in the dinner party scene, when the stage direction mentions,

Six men and six women file into the room in a double column. The

> men are all shapes and sizes, but their dress is identical with that of Zero in every detail. Each, however, wears a wig of a different color. The women are all dressed alike, too, except that the dress of each is of a different color. (106)

Just as these characters refer to each other in their degree of verisimilitude, there are other characters who also refer to some other in the play. For instance, Zero's Boss and Lt. Charles are tremendously alike in their action. It can be implied that the Boss wanted to speak to Zero of his inefficiency, the reason for his replacement by the adding machine. A similar thing happens when Lt. Charles sacks Zero from the cosmic soul recycling zone exactly after twenty five years of dedicated service by telling him

> You're a failure, Zero, a failure. A waste product. A slave to a contraption of steel and iron. (127)

Moreover, Shrdlu also can be considered as manifestation of Zero himself. Zero had inwardly desired his wife to die so that he could marry Daisy. His desire is brought forth in Shrdlu's irrational killing of his loving mother. Thus, the similarity between their roles belittles their importance but heightens their absurdity.

II

Innovative use of language has always been a paradigm of expressionist theatre. In this play, there are quite a few instances where the mixing of registers from different disciplines cause jarring effect. For example, in the Court scene, while delivering his self-defence, Mr. Zero cries out his inability to comprehend the language of law, as he says,

> All that talk gives me a headache. Objection sustained. Objection overruled. Answer yes or no. It gives me a headache. (110)

John Gassner has said that the dialogue of an expressionist play is a "continual interchange between the real and unreal that defies analysis" (*Form* 123). This quotation is not totally applicable to the play we have in hand. Nevertheless, Rice has attempted experiments with language which bring out several layers of meaning. The language also delineate the audience from norms of normal colloquial dialogue heard and uttered in daily life. As we see Mrs. Zero's nagging monologue contains the repetitious use of the phrase "twenty-five years" to suggest the absurdity of their situation. It also draws a parallel between the incessant tedium of waiting in Zero's career and her married life. As she goes on with her monologue, her statements have implicit echoes of the agony of

Vladimir and Estragon,

> well, I've been waitin'— waitin' for you to get started — see? It's been a good long wait, too. Twenty-five years! An' I ain't seen nothin' happen. Twenty-five years in the same job. Twenty-five years tomorrow! You're proud in the same job an' never missed a day! That's somethin' to be proud of ain't it? Sittin' for twenty-five years on the same chair, addin' up figures. (101)

Such phrases such as "a good long wait", "waitin", "I've been waitin'" and "I ain't seen nothin' happen" recollect Didi and Gogo. Although Mrs Zero talks of Zero being proud of his job, paradoxically, his hope of getting a promotion is shattered.

Various other techniques of dialogue are also used to emphasize the non-representative nature from daily life. In the dinner party scene, Rice uses the form of rapid dialogue to create a rhythm that is hollow and devoid of fruitful meaning. For instance, the guests speak,

SIX.	Some rain we're havin'.
FIVE.	Never saw the like of it.
FOUR.	Worst in fourteen years, paper says.
THREE.	Y' can't always go by the papers.
TWO.	No, that's right, too.
ONE.	We're liable to forget from year to year. (106)

Rice also uses the technique of polyphonic dialogue in which a character resumes the identical thought process of the previous character. For instance,

MRS SIX.	My aunt has gall-stones.
MRS. FIVE.	My husband has bunions.
MRS. FOUR.	My sister expects next month.
MRS. THREE.	My cousin's husband has erysipelas.
MRS. TWO.	My niece has St. Vitus's dance.
Mrs. ONE.	My boy has fits. (107)

These characters speak like technical objects addressing similar ideas and in a way reflect the dialogue pattern of absurd drama.

Some sort of distancing effect is also caused by the subtle juxtaposition of mixing numbers with words in the dialogues. For instance, in the self-defence monologue of Zero in the Court scene, Zero says,

> … One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve.

> Twelve of you. Six and six. That makes twelve. I figgered it up often enough. Six and six makes twelve. And five is seventeen. And eight is twenty-five. And there is twenty-eight. Eight and carry two. Aw, cut it out! Them damn figgers! I can't forget 'em. (108)

These jumbled content reveals the inadequacy of language to express complex emotions and ideas of Zero. A jarring effect is caused by the abrupt juxtaposition of substandard street English (Zero calls Daisy and Mrs. Zero, "cancha") and standard English. Morever, the last scene has Zero's dialect coming into contrast with the elevated speech of Lt. Charles in cosmic space. For instance,

> CHARLES. All right, Zero, cease firing.
> ZERO. Whaddja say? (125)

Thus, this sort of exaggerated techniques brings alive the facade between reality and non-reality.

If we take into account the stage setting of the play, it is decorated to alienate the audience from reality. J.L. Styan explains about the atmosphere and stage effect of expressionist drama,

> Its [expressionism's] atmosphere was often vividly dreamlike and nightmarish. The mood was aided by shadowy, unrealistic lighting and visual distortions in the set. The settings often avoided reproducing the detail of naturalistic drama, and created only those starkly simplified images that the play called for. The décor was often made up of bizarre shapes and sensational colors. (*Modern* 4)

From the initial scene itself, the distinction is visible, as the stage direction reveals,

> The walls are papered with sheets of foolscap covered with columns of figures. (100)

Other than actual stage directions, even production houses help to exaggerate by giving vigorous stage effects. An example is the Lee Simonson's Theatre Guild Production of 1923, where they presented the office, where Daisy and Mr. Zero sit in two high stools counting numbers, not only as a revolving turntable but also with the projection of red blotches and whirling numbers on the walls.

Like O' Neill, Rice also made innovative use of sound effects in the *The Adding Machine*. When Zero is fired, Rice describes the stage wildly flooding with theatrical sound effects:

> The wind, the waves, the galloping horses, the locomotive whistle,

> the sleigh bells, the automotive siren, the glass-crash. New Year's Eve, Election Night, Armistice Day and the Mardi-Gras. The noise is deafening, maddening, unendurable. Suddenly, it culminates in a terrific peal of thunder. (105)

Another example of Rice's use of sound is the mysterious off-stage noise of "a sharp clicking such as is made by the operation of the keys and levers of an adding machine" (106), amidst the dinner party, which is only meant to be heard by Zero on stage. It can be argued that visual distortions and sound effects are used in many plays but these sort of exaggerated distortions and sound effects is used to highlight that it is a non-reality that is happening on the stage not something by which the audience will only have catharsis.

Like postmodern drama and fiction which have multiple or put-on endings, in this play also there is a tendency to continually defer the ending. After Zero's execution he is given another chance in Elysian Fields to fulfill his earthly desires. After renouncing that and while working on a futuristic adding machine, he is again sent back to earth, albeit with "Hope" where he will become an even sadder slave. The deliberate pun on the word Hope which Lt. Charles ventriloquises for a female voice is meant that 'Hope' is a virtual non-entity for Zero. This can also be considered a minor form of role-playing done within the play. Just like Brutus Jones of O'Neill's *The Emperor* Jones (1920), Zero's journey is also cyclical as he comes back to the point from where he started, that is to earth. But whereas Brutus Jones meets his terrible end, Zero's expedition is ceaseless. At this point, it should also be remembered that the hint of anti-totalisation was given in Scene One itself when Mrs. Zero spoke of her liking love stories and comedies (which sometimes has irresolute endings) and her disfavouring of westerns (which has strong resolute endings). Thus, the play comes full circle giving lots of shock and disharmony to the viewer. It plays upon the genre of realism by its extra-dramatic effects which constitute its self-reflexive nature. ■

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A Desire for Assertion and Resultant Depression in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath

Tanu Gupta &

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Poetry in the 1950s – 1970s tried to re-evaluate subjectivity and the category of female experience, pointing on the expression of women's revolt against their oppression in a patriarchal system. It recorded their attempts to achieve economic, political, social and artistic independence with the aim of not only discarding stereotypical traditional images cast upon them by males but also confirming their equality. The confessional poets were named as neurotics by the society, as they neither follow any tradition nor respected any conventions. This conflict with the society leads them to introspection. In the course, comes a breaking point when they could not compromise with themselves. They lose themselves helpless in the battle and begin searching for the lost self. This conflict has given birth to a number of beautiful poems. Autobiographical truths of such poems were taken as initial points.

It is important to consider Plath's background because of its formative effect on her thinking and writing; she acknowledged the constraining nature of this background for women:

> And yet does it not all come again to the fact that it is a man's world? . . . why should [women] be relegated to the position of custodian of emotions, watcher of the infants, feeder of soul, body and pride of man? Being born a woman is my awful tragedy. From that moment I was conceived I was doomed to sprout breasts and ovaries rather than penis and scrotum; to have my whole circle of action, thought and feeling rigidity circumscribed by my inescapable femininity. (Quoted in Journals, 29-30)

Her letters convey, during the early part of 1960, some of the problems attended on the move to England: "I have gone through a very homesick and weary period" (Letters Home, 362); 'those dreary first weeks in London' (Letters Home, 365). Her daughter was born in April and by May Plath was coming to understand the limitations placed on her by a child and other housewifely cares:

> The baby's feedings and keepings the house clean, cooking and taking care of Ted's voluminous mail, plus my own, have driven me so I care only for carving out hours where I can start on my own writing. (LH, 384)

Later she was admitting to her mother her writing difficulties: "I am at the depressing, painful stage of trying to start writing after a long spell of silence" (LH 386). It is clear that she was still presenting herself to her mother and may be to herself. Plath observes her femininity as a limitation. Plath's mother comments: ". . . I yielded to my husband's wish that I become a full time home-maker. . . . I was totally imbued with the desire to be a good wife and mother" (LH, 10). . . I would simply have to become more submissive, although it was not my nature to be so (Ibid, 13). . . I cooked, mended and did what work I had on hand for my husband — abstracting material to update his lectures, correcting German quizzes, and attending to his correspondence (Ibid, 18).

Aurelia Plath demonstrated to her daughter that to be female was to be subservient to the male. Her mother does not appear to have considered any alternative action at that time and no doubt depended in large measure on the male perception of woman, a fact of which she may not have been aware. Demaris Wehr, a scholar of psychology of religion comments:

> Patriarchal women are tacitly and explicitly discouraged from gratifying their own needs or seeking fulfillment of their own desires. In the face of such deprivation . . . furthered by psychologies and theologies that have defined women's fulfillment in terms of their service of themselves as persons, or agents, in their own right. (Wehr, 101)

This description fits both Sylvia Plath and her mother. Plath began to develop mental illness at a younger age. When she was of the age of twenty, "Plath experienced mild depressions while studying at Smith" (Beam 98). Being the intelligent girl she was, Plath made attempts to explore and come to understand her mental illness, and possible ways to deal with it. After becoming a winner of a "prestigious national contest" and while "working at Mademoiselle Magazine in New York, during June of 1953, she suffered a rare career setback; she was denied admission to a Harvard Summer writing seminar" (Beam 98). She came back home, overwhelmed by her failure. As a result, she "inflict [ed]

of suicide" (Cooper 4). Whatever role Plath played in her life, her eager spirit strived for perfection.

> I want, I think, to be omniscient . . . I think would like to call myself "the girl who wanted to be God". Yet if I were not in this body, where would I be — perhaps I am destined to be classified and qualified. But, oh, I cry out against it. I am I – I am powerful — but to what extent? I am I. (LH, 40)

In every stage of life a woman has to follow the customs established by the society. For instance, a baby girl begins to be treated differently from a baby boy ever since she opens her eyes in the world for the very first time. Definitely, womanhood rules and limitations do not stop at a definite time. In her life a girl faces problems of "Young Womanhood" involving virginity and education. When she becomes a wife she is always shadowed by the "cult of true womanhood".

A woman is believed to be perfect when she completely possesses womanhood traits. She has to be performed womanly household tasks which are defined as the hallmark of female pride and happiness. To be a real woman is to be a good wife and a good mother. Domesticity is a woman's world. When a woman dies the society will judge her whether she has been 'Perfect Woman' or not. These inherited cultural stereotypes of woman in her social life, in fact, are claimed to have victimized a woman.

Sylvia Plath also knew the suffering of being a woman in a patriarchal society. Her personal journals originate the depression she feels at having been born a woman, and her diary states "I am at odds. I dislike being a girl, because as such I must come to realize that I cannot be a man" (Plath 54).

Poetry of Sylvia Plath shows an awareness of her depression. She was a confessional poet who wrote numerous poems and two novels filled with personal imagery and powerful focus. Her repressed anger comes across throughout her poems with a variety of aspects in her life. Some of Sylvia Plath's poems represent woman in the American patriarchal culture that undergoes a condition of being repressed and rebels against male domination. In her poems the women characters experience bondage and imprisonment and they have to accept the conditions uncomplainingly. However, the women speakers of the poems also have dreams of being free, independent, self-determined individuals and all of them embody their dreams through death.

Sexuality is used as a device of oppression. Plath's poems characterize

this dynamics by portraying female speakers who are afraid and resentful of the sexual violence represented by men. It is taken as one of the main reasons for the increasing emotional gap between men and women. In poems such as *Virgin in a Tree* and *Fever 103⁰*, Plath addresses the constant repression of women's sexuality, which has served for a long time as means to deprive women of independence over their bodies and subjectivity. In this sense, her poetry exposes the negative effects imposed by sexual violence and gender hierarchy on the relations between people. In Plath's own words —

> . . . my first book, *The Colossus* — I can't read any of the poems aloud now. I didn't write them to be read aloud. In fact, they quite privately bore me. Now these very recent ones — I've got to say them. I speak them to myself. Whatever lucidity they may have comes from the fact that I say them aloud.

Daddy is one of the Plath's poems depicting how a woman has always felt oppressed and searched for identity. Manifestation of man's domination over woman described her miserable condition as she says it is difficult for her to breathe freely or to sneeze at any time she wants to; she even has no courage to speak to her oppressors, her father and her husband. ". . . I have lived like a boot/ For thirty years, poor and white,/Barely daring to breathe or Achoo" (3-5). The expression of incapability to communicate with man, "The tongue struck in my jaw/It stuck in barb wire snare" (25-26), indicates domination of woman by man. The woman of the poem is a symbol of feebleness and powerlessness, whereas the man signifies power and competence.

Living like a "foot" indicates that woman is a inferior creature who has to shoulder all kinds of infliction, for though a foot is the lowest part of the human body, it has the heaviest task: responsible for holding any burden that the body has. She is a victim who gives her blood, her life, to her beloved husband who is akin to vampire, "The vampire who said he was you/And drank my blood for a year, /Seven years, if you want to know" (72-74). On the contrary, man's status degrades from the beginning to the end of the poem: from God to Nazi, from Nazi to Swastika, from Swastika to teacher, from teacher to evil, and from evil to Vampire. Each has a different value and significance and all of them refer to man's superiority.

In *Daddy*, the woman is metaphorically the Jew while man is metaphorical of the Nazi's traits. *Daddy* is a haunting poem that addresses the harmful effect that her complex relationship with her father has had on most ~~facets of her personal life. She expresses the lifelong psychological oppression~~

she felt due to the memory and longing to please her father, even after his death. In the poem *Daddy*, the woman has succeeded in killing the men that dominate her; while after death, the woman in *Lady Lazarus* transfigures into a killing agent and eats the man who has treated her as a thing. *Lady Lazarus* directly refers to the woman's hatred of the male doctor who dominates her. It is concerned with the troubles that a good woman faces to get freedom from man's domination. Consequently, the woman in *Lady Lazarus* is willing to suffer, to die once in every decade. To begin with, she tried to release herself from male control when she was very young.

In poem *The Jailer* the female speakers are aware of being caught in an ensuring network of male sexual and ideological dominance nevertheless they are unable to escape it. Such threat that pervades a male-dominated society is one of the reasons why Plath's female speakers assume a very negative view in relation to their own bodies. Kathleen Lent describes the cultural differences between male and female nakedness and how it interferes in Plath's poetry:

> The unclothed male body – in terms of the dominant figurative systems of western discourse – powerful in that it is sexually potent sexually armed; naked female body is – again, in terms of the figurative systems which dominate this period – vulnerable in that it is sexually accessible, susceptible to penetration, exploitation, rape and pregnancy.

The poem *Elm* was written on 19th April 1962 after her knowing of the affair of Ted Hughes with Assia Wevill. This poem begins with the statement that she knows the truth through her personal experiences: 'I know the bottom, she says. I know it with my great tap root:' (1). She expressed her loss of love and grief through this poem. Plath confesses the traumatic effect of electro-convulsive treatment in her poem *Elm*:

I have suffered the atrocity of sunsets.
Scorched to the root
My red filaments burn and stand, a hand of wires. (*Elm* 16-18)

She also confesses that isolation and lack of love haunt her:

I am inhabited by a cry.
Nightly it flaps out
Looking, with its hooks, for something to love. (28-30)

She also experiences anger and fear at her condition, comparing her inner demons to new consignment of bees:

It is dark, dark,
With the swarmy feeling of African hands
Minute and shrunk for export,

Black on black, angrily clambering.
(*The Arrival of the Bee Box* 12-15)

In the poem *The Applicant*, the man is defined by the black suit he puts on, but the definition of the woman shows her more alienated and dehumanized. While the man is a junk heap of miscellaneous parts given an exact shape by a suit of clothes, the woman is a windup toy, a puppet of that black suit. Even, she does not exist unless the black suit needs and wills her to.

Will you marry it?
It is guaranteed.
To thumb shut your eye sat the end
And dissolve of sorrow.
We make new stock from the salt. (*The Applicant* 14-18)

The woman in the poem is referred to as "it". Like the man, she has no individual existence, but where his suit gives him form, standing for the role he plays in a bureaucratic society, for the work, he does. The only thing that gives the woman form is the institution of marriage. She dissolves back into nothingness after it. Virginia Woolf said, "For most of history, Anonymous was a woman".

Similarly the main thesis of *The Second Sex* revolves also around the idea that woman has been held in a relationship long-standing oppression to man through her relegation to being man's "Other". Man is superior, God like: female is inert, passive, "doomed to immanence by man". As Beauvoir explains in the Introduction part of *Sexual Politics*:

> She determines and differentiates herself in relation to man, and he does not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other". (Beauvoir 6)

Through this poem Plath describes the stereotypes expected of a woman and expresses the anguish, humiliation and pain associated to being a woman in the 1960's. She is expected of a woman playing roles like stitching, sewing and cooking and be an emotional support too at the time of need. She is treated like a doll which can be handled anyhow and has none of her personal will. The use of pronoun "it" shows her dehumanization and utter lack of respect in this marital life. Here in the poem, Sylvia Plath expresses her disgust, revolt and anger towards the clearly defined gender roles that underpins in 1960's.

Plath makes a declaration against stereotypical standards that are imposed by society about the true meanings of what a marriage relationship is. In other words the author is passing her judgment on society's typical ideas about what a wife and a husband should be. The poem itself highlights her sadistic

routine and views of life. Whilst marriage itself is too often stereotyped and misjudged, Plath makes it seem as though marriage is an inescapable nightmare.

Women's traditional roles has limited and oppressed women's identities and opportunities for centuries, as shown in *The Applicant*, Sylvia Plath's own context and perception is conveyed through the better and sarcastic tone and the subject matter of the poem. By showing women as merely objects, not capable of autonomous decision, they are established as victims of men, disposable and of only material value: "But to twenty-five years she'll be silver/ In fifty, gold" (31-32). Women's restricted roles are also described in these lines: "It can sew, it can cook; / It can talk, talk, talk" (34-35). Stating woman's secondary position, H. M. Parshley also argues that:

> . . . since patriarchal times, woman has been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of human race, and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural 'feminine' characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. (Parshley 9)

Plath has appeared as a representative female victim in the literature on sexual politics, a causality of the patriarchal world of marriage. Germaine Greer claimed that: "Plath wounded of marriage and committed suicide. Had she been alive during the late sixties and early seventies when the women's liberation movement developed?" Greer believed that Plath's feminist consciousness had not been sufficiently formed by the time of her death to allow her to resist victimization and oppression by men. Therefore, feminist writers have agreed that Plath was actually victimized by the men around her. Phyllis Chester, a psychologist argues: "Plath was lonely and isolated".

Marriage and motherhood were more than the societal conventions of the fifties to which women were to conform. Plath was a victim of male oppression and the ideology of the family. She lived in a decade when women were encouraged not to entertain the idea of independence rather to see their targets in life as being good housekeepers, wives and mothers. In a patriarchal society, women are not supposed to raise their voice. Commenting on the status of woman, Juliet Mitchell observes: "Production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization of children are the key structures of woman's situation" (Mitchell 100).

Plath resisted and took hold of the power of language and literature.

She took the personal and made it political through her writings. She expresses her negative emotions in *Lady Lazarus*.

Beware
Beware
Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air. (*Lady Lazarus* 80-84)

In *Edge*, Plath expresses one of the fundamental problems with the treatment of women — they are expected to simultaneously act as sex object and domesticated mothers. Plath alludes to Greek tragedy *Madea*, about a character of the same name that killed her children in madness and frustration. Plath felt that she had been abandoned by Hughes and felt like women had the ridiculous belief to be both sex objects and mothers. The woman's body is compared to that of a pitcher of milk, slowly being depleted by her children.

In Sylvia Plath's stark poem, *Children Woman*, she expresses the feelings that assail her with respect to her infertility. While infertility is regarded by many affected women as a loss and a center of grief, in Plath's case the inability to have children makes her feeling of useless, although she is not fulfilling her real life's purpose, and the lack of children obliterates her future, making her life simply a push towards death.

The poem *Two Sisters of Persephone* presents two potential parts for Plath and also exposes her severe depression that began as a young girl and continued throughout her adulthood. With her new marriage, she questioned whether or not she should work or become the stereotypical wife, stay at home, and only bear children. The speaker of the poem dramatizes the ideology that only women who bear children fulfill their destiny and the virgin dying without progeny dies sour as a lemon.

At this barren enterprises
Rat-shrewd go her squint eyes,
Root-pale her meager frame. (*Two Sisters of Persephone* 10-12)
. . .
Freely become sun's bride, the latter
Grows quick with seed.
Grass-couched in her labor's pride,
She bears a king. Turned bitter

And sallow as any lemon,

The other, wry virgin to the last,
Goes graveward with flesh laid waste,
Worm-husbanded, yet no woman. (21-28)

The image of one sister is like 'root-pale' and second sister giving birth to a 'king' after marrying the sun reflect somewhat the myth of the goddess of the underworld.

Psychological analysis of Sylvia's state revealed that she suffered from depression and contradictory feelings which brought her both discomfort and anxiety and made her upset most of the times. The psychological and emotional isolation was felt in many of her poems. Love and death, life and art, come into sight as extremities with which the poet plays with a sinister design of the most dangerous kind. She used poetry as a tool to express her depressed feelings. ■

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Superhuman Mothers in Raja Rao's Short Stories and Novels

Saraswati Panda

The impact of Indian tradition,culture and religio-spiritual ideas are clearly discernible in the short stories and novels of Raja Rao. One aspect of this is found in the delineation of some superhuman mother-characters.Some noteworthy examples are goddess Talakamma in the well-known story "Javni" from *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories,*Goddess Kenchamma in the novel *Kanthapura* and Mother Ganga in the novel *The Serpent and the Rope*. These mother-characters remain integral part of our tradition, culture and religious faith and also of the life of the people. At times tradition appears irrational and murky when combined with superstition.

Born in a lower caste, Javni was married at the age of eighteen only to lose her husband after a brief period of happy conjugal life.He died of snake-bite and she was left with 'her bare,broad forehead" showing "pain and widowhood*"(The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories*,83). Since then the little hut by the garden door that her brother gave, has been her home. Being a childless widow her love-lorn heart pines for a child.Her empty heart finds fulfilment in the youngest child of her brother Bhima.Her love for the child brings her bitter words and hostile behaviour from her sister in-law.Her brother always hated her.She was working as a servant in the house of the Revenue Inspector and earning only one rupee each month.Thus her life was a saga of suffering.But her selfless worship and sincere faith in the goddess Talakamma enables Javni to bear the burden of suffring and misery. After she became a widow the wives of her husband's brothersmade her life miserable.She wanted to put an end to her life by jumping into the river. But she stopped each time

she wanted to kill herself.She confesses, "I know Goddess Talakamma would be angry with me"(92).It is as if she feels the presence of Talakamma in her or near her.This affinity with the goddess makes her strong enough to face the cruelties of life.R.L Sharma rightly observes "Her simple faith in the Godess is her anchor in life's turbulent ocean"(p-44).All these misfortunes could not shake her faith, beacause "she knew they were nothing,for above all,she said,Goddess Talakamma moved and reigned"(p-91).Her innocence. Simplicity and her faith in goddess Talakamma saves her, indeed from disintegration.Thus Talakamma has been a saviour force, a protective mother to Javni.

Her faith, at times, borders on superstition.She keeps a lamb to be offered to Goddess Talakamma every three years.She admits, "I owe a lamb every three years to the goddess (p-94).In response to the narrator Ramappa's question"And what does she give in return"', she gets angry and proclaims:

> All! Everything ! should I live if that Goddess did not protect me? Would that child come to me if the Goddess did not help me? Would Mother be so good to me? Why, Ramappa, everything is hers. O Great Goddess Talakamma, give everybody good health and long life and all progeny!Protect me, Mother!

But being such a seeker of protection and wellbeing she didn't express concern for an innocent creature like a lamb. Perhaps superstition in the guise of devotion blinded her conscience. Her affection for the calf was quite spontaneous where as it was not so in case of the lamb.This contrasting attitude, though covered under the garb of devotion ,reveals how superstition occasionally overshadows faith and devotion. On the otherhand, this also shows her simple faith of a villager. Bhattacharya writes in his attempt to analyse the matter:

> Her religion was not specifically of the Vedas or Upanishads or of Gita ;nor was it as propounded or preached by such philisophers as Sankara and Ramanuj. Hers was that simple faith of a villager who worships with greatest devotion even a pebble smeared with red paint and placed under a peepal tree.(Bhattacharya202)

To Javni, Goddess Talakamma is a compassionate and protective mother with superhuman powers and acts incessantly through the cycle of life. She feels the Goddess to be almost inseparable from her. This sense of unity makes her believe, of course unconsciously, that the presence of Goddess permeates her whole being. This is a sort of spiritual union.R.L Sharma rightly observes:

> ….One may obseve that Javni, the domestic servant, in her unlimited devotion has realized the essence of being through equanimity and inner

> poise despite the hostile circumstances that she has to cope with.This harmony borders upon the spiritual and is a direct result of centring her being in the Devi Talakamma(45).

Raja rao, thus, presents Goddess Talakamma as a superhuman Mother who acts in and activates human life . But this story mainly shows the mysterious and inner relationship between the Goddess and Javni. When the writer delineates the character of Kenchamma, he reveals her intimate relationship with all the villagers in all circumstances. She is, thus, quite a benevolent Mother showering her grace on her children, ie the villagers of Kanthapura.

Both Talakamma and Kenchamma belong to an age-old tradition of *grama-devata*(deity of the village) worshipped with great devotion in many villages throughout India. They are dearer to the villagers and the later can open their hearts to the deities as a son or daughter does to his/her mother. In every festival of the village and in every auspicious occasion of a family they are invoked as if they are indispensible to the villagers. It is, indeed, a pan-Indian phenomenon. What M.K Nayak writes about Kenchamma is true for all such deities : "Kenchamma, indeed represents an ubiquitous phenomenon-the *Grama deveta* (deity of village) indispensable to a south Indian village"(Ramachandra-54).Mostly the village deities are feminine. Some other familiar deities are Maheswaramma, Goddamma, Annamma, Pujamma etc. There are also some specialized goddesses , namely Mariamma,the goddess of smallpox, Ankamma ,the goddess of cholera, Kokalamma, the goddess of cough etc.

Kenchamma, the legendary goddess, has ultimately settled dow among the Kanthapurians. Though a goddess descending from the Heavens, she has been a living Mother to the credulous villagers of Kanthapura showering her grace in times of crisis. With their unswerving faith, she has been an inseparable part of their life. They claim, and claim very confidently, "Kenchamma is our goddess"(*Kanthapura* .8). In India, many gods and goddess have been living parts of our mundane life protecting us, according to popular belief, and bringing us blessings . Examples are galore . Our glaring example is Lord Jagannath at Puri. Though adored and worshipped through out the world, He has been inextricably linked with Odia culture and life of the people. HereKenchamma has been the protecting sprite for the inhabitants of Kanthapura. A goddess, a superhuman being , she has been considerably humanised by the novelist.Any account of Kanthapura will be incomplete wihout reference to Kenchamma.

In India, many gods and goddess have wonderful legends associated with their appearance.In Odisha,the famous Lord Akhandalamani, a form of Lord Shiva and equally famous Maa Tarini of Ghatagaon in Keonjhar district

have quite interesting legends behind their appearance . In case of Kenchamma, the legend reveals that as a result of the penances of sage Tripura . She descended from the Heavens to fight with and slay a demon, ages ago,who demanded the Kanthapurians ' "young sons as food" and "young women as wives"(p-8).Since then she has been an inseparable part of their life.

She has never failed them in their grief and misery. For the people of Kanthapura, Kenchamma is a living force. "Capable of miracles and of active participation in the destinies of the villagers in the manner in which gods and goddess performed miracles in the Puranic days"(Ramachandra55).In case of scarcity of rain she gives rain in response to their prayer. She saves them from untimely death during the outbreak of smallpox and cholera.When smallpox spreads, a vow to "walk the holy-fire on the annual fair"(p-8) is enough to propitiate the goddess. During the outbreak of cholera , an offering of "a sari and gold trinket to the goddess "(p-8) brings her blessings.The Kanthapurians sincerely believe that she can operate within her jurisdiction . Consequently she can weild her protective power only in Kanthapura.They consider Kenchamma as exclusively their goddess. "She is the Goddess of Kanthapura, not of Talassana"(p-9) .They have assimilated Kenchamma into their life pattern . That is why they not only pray for her protection, but also make her a living memory while waking up in the morning and retiring for bed at night. She is in their heart in the morning and at night. They pray :

> O Kenchamma ! protect us always like this through famine and disease, death and despair.O most high and bounteous!.....Kenchamma, Great Goddess,protect us! O Benign one! (p.9)

In suffering and festivity they equally seek Kenchamma's grace .It may be the singing of Harikathha or celebration of Sankara-Jayanti, in everyrhing Kenchamma's grace works. Even in organising the future festivals , namely the Rama festival , the Krishna festival and the Ganesh festival her grace is sought.Thus Kenchamma is inextricably intertwined with the village life.Even in dream and despair the villagers have her in mind. If someone sends his son or any distant relation to the city for higher studies if he becomes a collector or achieves something people see in Kenchamma's grace.If Sankamma, a village woman, accidentally escapes a snake-bite it happens beacause of Kenchamma's grace .Henry Whitehead rightly observes , "Siva and Vishnu may be more dignified beings ,but the village deity is regarded as a more present help in trouble, and is more intimately concerned with the happiness and prosperity of the villagers"(p-16).

Here also as in the story 'Javni' at times their faith borders on harmful superstitions.When malaria started spreading among villagers, Siddana's wife Sati, one of the victims , "tore a rag from her sari fringe and put into it a three-piece bit and a little rice and areca nut,and hung it securely to the roof"(-58),in the name of the goddess.When Madanna wanted to give Sahib's pull to his suffering son, his wife refused. She said, if the gods are angry, they'll take away not only your children but yourself, Oh,you man…"(p-58).A frightened Madanna bit his cheeks, asked pardon of Sri Kenchamma.When Sahib gave pills to be taken by everybody many threw them into the background . The result was that many succumbed to death.

In *The Serpent and the Rope,* Raja Rao presents the Ganga,India's most sacred river,as mother.She is a mother in many ways –a loving mother, a holy mother ,a cultural mother ,a spiritual mother and a wise mother . With her stream flows the life-stream of the Indians.On her banks fourish many spiritual and cultural centres. Her sacred banks provide places for many *sadhaka* and saints who strive to attain knowledge of the Self .The spiritual seekers adore and pray her with many *stotras*. Following is one of them:

> Devi Sureshvari Bhagavathi Gange……
> Savours of the three worlds of restless waves,
> Clear is Thy water circling upon the head of Shiva ,
> May my mind ever repose at Thy lotus-Feet
> (*The Serpent and the Rope,* p-32)

The Ganga , though a geographical river, flows in the minds of the Indians. It has become India's religious, cultural river thereby being inextricably linked with their lives and acquiring the status of a cultural mother. Indians address her as Mother Ganga, hail her as "holy mother"(41).She is with the Indians in life and death, in *samsara* (worldly life) and *bairagya* (life beyond the mundane). She carries not only water but also benediction.

When Rama left the mountains and the Ganges with his little mother, they were filled with "immeasurable pain"(42). "Sweet motherliness"(33) of the Ganga probably is the cause of this pain. In his words mother Ganga has been personified: "Mother Ganga had her feet all yellowed with turmeric, and she carried the flowers of our evenings in her hair"(p-41).Indians really feel a special attraction for this sacred river.

The Ganga surges out of the Himalayas- it was Gangotri "where the holy-mother took her birth"(41)—to play a distinct role,ie. "to purify mankind"(32). That is why we sing *stotras* of adoration for her. The emotional observation

of Rama makes Ganga appear as a living mother before us : "Like one of our own Mothers, Ganga, Mother Ganga,has sat by the ghats, her bundle beside her. What impurity ,Lord, have we made her bear"(32).In fact, with immense motherly patience Ganga has been playing the role of a purifier for ages.

When the Hindus die, their ashes and bones are consigned to Ganga. She delivers them to the sea. Thus after death also she is with the deceased.The Himalayas and the Ganges symbolize the cycle of death and birth. "Truth is the Himalaya, and Ganges humanity.That is why we throw the ashes of the dead to her.She delivers them to the sea, and the sun heats the waters so that , becoming clouds, they return to the Himalaya .The cycle of death and birth goes on eternally like the snows and the rivers"(35).

Ganga flows as if it is synonymous with the flow of life. Ganga is also intimately associated with spiritual sadhana of the Hindus.After the house-holders' activities are over, our Aryan ancestors used to tread up the banks of the Ganga in quest of "solitude" and "the identity of Truth"(35).It was a journey for self-discovery and the waters of Mother Ganga brought them succour. When one dips in the Ganga, are feels so pure.It is like mother's touch cleansing the child. Mother Ganga also gives us an opportunity for expiation. To put in Rama's words : "One could expiate for the kidnapped and forsaken , dipping and dipping in Ganges by the Himalaya . One could expiate also in the Ganges for the dead"(41).

Upanishad calmly proclaims: Sarvam Khlidam Brahma. All of this is that absolute Reality ,ie.Brahma.Indian seers visualize Brahma in stones and trees, in mountains and rivers.In India *daru* is Brahma. Here water is wisdom. "If wisdom became water, the Ganges would be that water, flowing down to the seven seas"(41).So it is quite natural that Raja Rao who imbibes Indian tradition and spiritual wisdom sees superhuman mothers embodied in the Goddess Talakamma,Kenchamma and the sacred river Ganga. ■

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Tagore's *Gitanjali* : A Critical Perspective

Prafulla Chandra Swain

During his lifetime, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a towering and myriad-minded genius of legendary proportions not only in his native Bengal or his beloved India, but to a considerable extent, throughout the world. As a multifaceted personality par excellence, he not only carried the literature and arts of Bengal, virtually single-handedly to great heights of creativity, but, by his inspiring words, his lyrically unequalled songs, his unstinting support for the cause of India's freedom during a long and turbulent phase of her history, he lifted Indian culture and Indian psyche to an unprecedented level of revitalization. Undisputedly the greatest writer in modern Indian literature, the Bengali poet and novelist Rabindranath won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. He was also awarded the Knighthood by the British Government in 1915; but he surrendered it in 1919 as a protest against the Jalianawallabag massacre where British troops brutally killed some 400 Indian demonstrators protesting against colonial rule. Rabindranath was born in Calcutta in a wealthy and cultured Brahmin family known as Tagores. The Tagores were pioneers of the undivided Bengali Renaissance and tried to combine traditional Indian culture with western ideas. Rabindranath, the youngest of his parents' thirteen children received his early education, first from tutors and then at a variety of schools, including the then Bengal Academy, Calcutta where he studied Bengali history and culture. Then he studied law at the University College, London, but left after a year without completing his course. In 1883, Rabindranath married Mrinalini Devi Raichaudhuri and had two sons and three daughters. His first book, an anthology of poems, was published when he was seventeen only. As some of the 'Zamidari' estates were located in East Bengal (now Bangladesh), he moved there in 1890 and collected local legends and folklore and wrote seven volumes of poetry between 1893 and 1900, including *Sonar Tari* (1894)

later translated as The Golden Boat and *Khanika* (1900). In 1911, he composed *Jana Gana Mana* (translated as The Morning Song of India) as the inaugural song of the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress and the poem has become the national anthem of independent India. Another Tagore lyric, captioned *Amar Sonar Bangla* (Our Golden Bengal) has been accepted as the national anthem of Bangladesh since 1971.

Besides *Gitanjali*, two other excellent collections of poems of Tagore literature are *Ardha Chandra* (1913) "The Crescent Moon" and *Balaka* (1916) "Fight of Swans". The poems of *Balaka* fortyfive in number, were written between 1914 and 1916. The poet was spending his days with his family at places such as Ramgarh Hill, Shialaidaha, Calcutta, Allahabad and far off Srinagar (Kashmir) when most of these poems were composed. An evaluation of the poems reveals that the poet's mind was distracted and restless. He appears to have felt that the dawning of a new world was inminent which manking could reach only through endless pain, suffering and death. This feeling, mixed with fear and hope, is reflected in some of the poems included in *Balaka.* According to a critic:

> He might have had a presentiment of the First
> World War, the news of which came to him later. (1)

The title of the book *Balaka* is greatly significant as it strikes the fundamental note of the lyrics. Balaka in Sanskrit means a groups of swans. As the swans take their flight in a row and move in the air in search of the Unknown, they move through the clouds and lightning, defying all dangers. They seek to find out the new and the eternal. Their quest does not cease with death. Death is only a gateway to another life through which their quest continues. The rhythmic movement of the swans seems to reiterate this internal truth. While describing the curving stream of the Jhelum in Kashmir in the glowing twilight of the evening, Tagore writes in the title song:

> In my heart I heard the flight of the nest-free bird with innumerable others,
> Through day and night, through light and darkness from one unknown source of another.
> The wings of the empty universe resound with his song –
> "Not here, but some where beyond" (2)

Besides *Balaka*, the lyrics collected in this anthology and titled like *Sabujer Abhijan* (The March of the Green Power), *Chhabi* (Picture), *Sahajahan* are considered to be among the best ever written by Rabindranath Tagore.

Besides poetry, literature lovers can delight themselves with Tagore's

novels and short stories which trace and highlight the growth of ideas which had far-reaching influence in shaping the prolific author's character and personality. Among the novels *Chokher Bali* (1903), *Gora* (1909), *Ghaire Baire* (1916) "The Home and the World" and *Shesher Kavita* (1929) "The Last Poems" are considered as masterpieces of Tagore literature. The first three novels are written from the historical – political point of view highlighting the constraints of colonial rule on the Indian mind-set. The plight of Hindu widows, rise of nationalism among Indians and holistic view of humanity as a whole are the thematic ideas chronicled in *Chokher Bali*, *Gora* and *Ghaire Baire* respectively. However, *Shesher Kavita* remains one of his outstanding creations – a classic. The novel combines prose and poetry in a fine trelliswork to tell the love story of Lavanya and Amit. The intense, intellectual and sensitive dialogues between the hero and the heroine make the novel rank as one of the most cherished works in Bengali literature. Critics have discovered some autobiographical elements in this novel also. The story also portrays satirically the so-called high society of his day when people competed to show off the "Englishness" notwithstanding being born brown Indians. Kate (real name Ketaki) who hopelessly tries to attract Amit's attention is a prime example. Poor Cissie, Amit's sister, trying to imitate Kate, also belongs to this group. All this adds to the enigma of the book, but it does not detract from the fact that it is one of Tagore's best novels.

The particular literary creation which won the Nobel Prize for Rabindranath at the age of 51, is *Gitanjali*, a collection of poems. The original Bengali collection of 157 poems was published on August 14, 1910. The English version of the book *Gitanjali* or Song Offerings is a collection of 103 English poems of Tagore's own translation: which contained 53 poems from the original Bengali Gitanjali and 50 other poems from *Achalayatan* (a drama) and eight other books of poetry. The translations were undertaken prior to his visit to England in 1912 where the poems were extremely well-received and Tagore became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 out of the twentyeight nominations received by the Swedish Academy (Stockholm) that year. The English version *Gitanjali* or Song Offerings became very famous in the West and was widely translated. In the time-gap between the nomination to the Swedish Academy and the award of the Nobel Prize, the book was reprinted ten times in London. William Butler Yeats, winner of the Noble Prize in literature in 1923, included some selected poems of the English *Gitanjali,* in *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, edited by him and published in 1936. Earlier in 1915, the leading Spanish poet Juan Ramon Jimenez, initiated the translation from English to Spanish twenty volumes of Tagore's work, Anna Akhmatova, a Russian poet and admirer of Tagore literature translated some Tagore poems into the Russian language in mid – 1960's. Yesunari Kawabata, the

first Japanese and 1968 – Nobel Laureate in literature, read the Japanese versions of some books of Tagore and hailed him as a "sage like poet". *Gitanjali* or Song Offerings thus became the first and only literary work by an Indian to win world-wide appreciation, including the revered Nobel Prize. While analysing the growth and the nature of Tagore's genius it is important to understand the Presentation Speech on December 10, 1913 where he spoke glowingly of the influence of the Christian mission in India as a rejuvenating force that led to the revival of natural life and poetry in the vernaculars. The "Citation" (the Presentation Speech) was equally unstinting in praise of Tagore's rich poetic endowments, sensitive verse and consummate poetic skill. Indeed, the book had an enormous impact on the reading public across the Western World, for whom Tagore became the voice of India's spiritual heritage. The first instance of this tremendous impact is seen in W.B. Yeats' reaction. He was among the earliest European admirers of Tagore and also wrote an excellent "introduction to *Gitanjali* or Song Offerings. According to Yeats, the emotional potency of the verses is that they could even in translation produce such a profound effect on a mind already acquainted with fine literature Yeats and Tagore's readers across Europe were all struck by the rare combination of the highest excellence in art and the profoundly human matter that is simple and sublime. The book partakes of the universally and essentially human and touches all that is above the worldly and the ephemeral in us. As the book resonates with devoted love for the Creator, pure love of life, naturalness of expression of moods, it breaks the barriers of skepticism and fills the readers with insidious sweetness. Thus, *Gitanjali* promises to renew life in readers and to give them the quiet peace of the soul that modern living has made difficult to attain. Thus *Gitanjali* and all his writings – some two hundred books – show the influence of different parts of the Indian cultural background and of the rest of the world.■

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Depiction of Tragedy in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

K.M Kamalakkannan

Arthur Miller (1915-2005) was one of the distinguished American dramatist, essayist, short story writer, novelist and an autobiographer. Miller was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for drama as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for his masterpiece *Death of a Salesman*. He has been acknowledged, along with Tennessee Williams, as one of the two greatest American dramatists of the post-World War II era. Miller attained eminence as a dramatist primarily for four plays he wrote early in his career: *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953) and *A View from the Bridge* (1955). Insisting that "the individual is doomed to frustration when once he gains a consciousness of his own identity". Miller synthesizes elements from social and psychological realism to depict the individual's search for identity. *Death of a Salesman* - Miller's the most acclaimed play, is a critique of America's preoccupation with materialism after the World War II. The play depicts the mental deterioration of the protagonist Willy Loman, a salesman, whose superficial doctrine of success turns into tragedy when he realises that he is no longer wanted by his company.

The present critical study takes an overall view of Miller's works with a particular reference to *Death of a Salesman.* Miller's concept of tragedy is entirely different. He does not believe that the tragic hero must be a man of exalted rank. The title, *Death of a Salesman* makes it quite clear that Willy Loman is no exceptional being. He is one of the numerous salesmen and the play

deals with nothing higher than the materialistic aspects of life in contemporary American society.. The truth is that *Death of a Salesman* is a play about a man who is seeking for a kind of ecstasy in life which the machine - civilization deprives of the people. He is looking for his selfhood, for his immortal soul, so to speak, and people who don't have the intensity of that quest, think he is odd, but a lot of salesmen, in a line of work where ingenuity and individualism are acquired by the nature of the work, have a very intimate understanding of his problems".

Miller opines that a man's stature as a hero should not be utterly dependent on his social rank. A grocer can surpass the President of the United States as a tragic figure, provided the "intensity" of the grocer's commitment to his course is the maximum possible. It matters not at all whether the hero falls from a great height or a small one, whether he is highly conscious or only dimly aware of what is happening, if the "intensity" is there. Willy Loman, according to Miller, is a very brave spirit who "cannot settle for half but must pursue his dream of himself in the end". Willy is no dumb brute heading mindlessly to his catastrophe. Had Willy been unaware of his distance from values that endure, he would have died contentedly in the course of some routine job. But he is agonised by his awareness of being in a false position. He is constantly haunted by the hollowness of all he has placed faith in. He has an intense consciousness that the life he had built for himself was without form and inner meaning. It cannot be called a complete consciousness because there is necessarily a severe limitation of self-awareness in any character, even the most knowing. This very limit serves to complete the tragedy and, indeed, to make it all possible.

The whole concern of the play is money, competition, success or failure in the materialistic sense. Personal relations are at a discount in this milieu as depicted in the play. Miller is at pains to point out that *Death of a Salesman* is not a critique of capitalism. "Willy Loman has broken a law, without whose protection, life is insupportable, incomprehensible to him and to many; it is the law which says that a failure in society and business has no right to live". Miller thus inclines to imply that anyone who has to do with the sharp vicissitudes and rapid changes in American life has fully gained our right to sympathy and consideration. Willy Loman, the hero, brings upon himself his downfall by a tragic trait-the trait of living in a world of illusions. His worship of people, who attained success smacks of hero worship-an exercise that is illusory and comes to naught.

As a salesman himself, Willy Loman wants to become a hero; he has hallucinations of Ben as a hero, an old salesman (David Singleman) as a

hero and Biff as a football hero. Willy recalls how Ben went to the jungle at seventeen and emerged rich at twenty-one; he remembers how 84-years-old Dave Singleman did his job with the help of the telephone and how everyone from all over the country came to his funeral. Willy's dreams about Biff's career, show the intensity of his illusions: "Without a penny to his name, three great universities are begging for him, and from there the sky's the limit, because it is not what you do, Ben. It is who know and the smile on your face! It's contacts, Ben contacts!". Thus, Willy unwittingly attaches importance to personality, persuasive power and the ability to outwit others by hook or by crook, as being basically necessary for a successful survival in this materialistic world.

There is an element of tragedy when Willy compares himself to the more successful Charley, his neighbor who lends him money when Willy is not on straight commission. Charley is liked, but not well liked. Willy concedes that Charley is "a man of few words, and they respect him." The height of pathos is reached when Linda tells Biff and Happy how their father is suffering in his old age for their sake even by agreeing to work on "straight commission, like a beginner, an unknown, for five weeks". When Biff calls Willy's employers "ungrateful bastards", Linda's sharp report is: "Are they any worse than his sons?"

Miller has nothing but pity for Willy Loman, the salesman who can no longer justify his existence. Once he loses his ability to sell and whose fate mirrors a world in which "the absolute value of the individual human being is believed in only as a secondary value". However, Miller's criticism is reserved for the web of deception and self-deception Willy has woven round his own life and his lives of his sons. Thus, for all his foibles, on account of which Willy has become a victim of his delusions and eventually takes of his life, his tragedy arouses our sympathy and pity and, on this account, *Death of a Salesman* is a modern-day tragedy.

The responsibility for Willy's tragedy lies squarely on the society of which he is a member. Willy dies a victim of what is called the great American dream, according to which a man can attain material success by means of personal attractiveness, charm, magnetism and contacts.

Death of a Salesman is also, to a degree, constructed as an investigation. Willy Loman hunts the secret of his failure; he wants to know the right path. His mistake is that there is no right path; he has "all the wrong dreams", as his son Biff says at the end. This is the wrong path he has travelled all along for most of his life. He asks his brother Ben and neighbor Charley for the secret

of success; they cannot tell him and he cannot guess that it does not exist. But although Willy makes a considerable personal contribution to his own downfall, the main burden of guilt is to be borne by the dominant forces in society, and in this case, these forces are summed up in the phrase, "the great American dream".

This does not, however, imply that there is no good in society. The forces of good in this play are Charley and his son Bernard. Both of them are always ready and anxious to help the Lomans-Charley by lending Willy money, and Bernard by supplying the answers in the math paper to Biff. The good to be found in these two characters is deep and instinctive; it rarely finds any verbal expression. The good people have no theories, except for their goodness; their practice and their faith are the same, doing goodness. ■

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Vigor and Flaw of Modern Man in James Reaney's *the Donnellys*

J. Thenmozhi

Reaney is one of the most renowned dramadist in Canadian literature. He is widely known as well accomplished stylish and prolific writers of his period. He made his entry in Canadian literature with his first play *Donnelys(*1968). He began his odyssey into the dark, mysterious and unsheltered hinterland of the soul to plumb some perennial problems of human existence. His first play received both critical acclaim and disapprobation in Canada and abroad and established Reaney in the front rank of Canadian writers. His plays depict the anguish of sensitive individuals resulting from their spiritual uprootedness and the confusion of values in the society they live in. He portrayed the dilemma of the modern man's evils of materialism, escapism and cynicism.

At the outset, it should be stressed that Reaney has not simply documented the history of *The Donnellys* of Lucan, Ontario. He has reshaped the bare historical facts into a rich work of art enshrining the inevitable human conflicts, struggles and tragedies, never failing to underscore the indomitable will of man bound to snatch eternity even in the midst of a crumbling world. Whatever be the real causes for the masked enemies of The Donnellys comprising *Sticks and Stones, The St. Nicholas Hotel* and *Handcuffs* raise them to truly heroic proportions. Thereby he upholds the cardinal principle that man may be destroyed but not defeated. At this juncture, when we are moving towards the 21st century packed with problems and prospects. *The Donnellys* may lend inspiration to fight on with trust in ourselves. In an alien land, in the perspective of sweeping socio-political, economic and even cultural changes, the testing of the emerging world very much depends on committed & confident

individuals.

The poet, seer and researcher in Reaney scans the facts relating to the Biddulph township tragedy meticulously. He draws enough clues to perceive and dramatize the events in such a way as to resent The Donnellys as a family who would not surrender to the pressures and prejudices of their society. Herein lies the relevance of this play for posterity. In the Canadian setup Reaney underscores the need to take a bold stance even in the face of mounting threats.

The Donnellys earned many enemies and friends in their eagerness to plant themselves in their alien but new land. Their situation is amply reflected in the title of the first section, Sticks and Stones, It is a complex stage metaphor loaded in every rift with ore supremely significant to our times and perhaps for all times. Ironically enough, the building of a new world is challenged by 'sticks and stones', still the emerging new world is erected very much on 'sticks & stones'.

Reaney had to wrestle with cold facts documented in court proceeding. Besides, he had to overcome the prevalent prejudices relating to the Donnellys, generated by Thomas P. Kelly's books, *The Black Donnellys* (1954) and *Vengeance of the Black Donnellys* (1962) and Orlo Miller's *The Donnellys Must Die* (1962) and by tell-tales. It should be observed in credit of Reaney that he succeeded in making *The Donnellys* a human drama showing full well the strengths and weaknesses of man. James Noonan rightly observes: "Even if some of the historical details are altered, even if he does not give us a complete picture of the 'real' Donnellys, we must remember that the play's importance lies in its dramatic, not in its historical qualities. The greatest achievement of Sticks and Stones is what Reaney as a poet-dramatist has made out of the bare bones of history that he has dug up, as he says 'from the attics of local courthouses' and elsewhere" (Foreword, 6).

Reaney's masterly techniques, particularly the imaginative merging of prose and poetry, realistic action and mime, song and dance, games and ritual, fantasy and dream, past, present and future and the resourceful use of opposites, paradoxes and ironies point to the rich possibilities of future drama in this direction. One may be tempted to see Aeschylus, Shakespeare. Marlow, Brecht and many more 'in action' at some point or other in *The Donnellys.* Reaney's absorption of the past masters in his dramatic craft, art, and even its style and texture is a cue for posterity who are bound to struggle for the right path in future drama. The easy transition in time and place and the swift glide from fact to fiction and vice-versa are achieved by a total theatre sense in Reaney. "All these changes are evoked with the help of the simplest props-

ladders, sticks, stones, clotheslines, shirts, wheels, hayforks, barrels, chairs, noisemakers, maps, candles, lanterns etc. As in the other plays, Reaney's structural approach is to juxtapose many sequences of different times, settings and moods. In *Sticks and Stones* he has perfected this method over anything he has ever done before so that one sequence flows easily into another without the separation and numbering of scenes that occurred in his earlier plays such as *Colours in the Dark* and *Listen to the Wind* (Noonam, 7). It is a pointer to the emerging new world as well as growing Canadian drama in a fast changing global socio-political backdrop.

The Donnellys is a good instance to show how a vast fund of uninspiring or even awe-inspiring 'objective, real information' could be turned into pulsating drama by a deft creative, poetic touch. Reaney displays remarkable discretion in merging diverse sequences relating to the chilling Donnelly murders. He combines the historical, human, tragic and imaginative elements in an Aeschylian or Shakespearean way so as to facilitate the triumph of the true human aspirations. It is an exciting dramatic experience (a vital guideline for an aspiring dramatist) to witness the varied sequences fabricated in *Sticks and Stones* merging into each other sequence like, 'the going to Goderich Sequence', 'a mass menace sequence', 'the Donnelly house sequence' etc. They are only a few of these.

At the same, in keeping with the rich Greek dramatic tradition, Reaney maintains an unbroken story line sustained by an intricate yet highly imaginative organic cohesion. For example *Sticks and Stones*, Act I shows us the events beginning from James Donnelly's settling in Biddulph to his killing of Farrell at Logging Bee. Act II delineates the anxiety, anguish and suffering of Mrs. Donnelly and her children before and after the sentencing of Donnelly. It meticulously covers a period of more than seven years. The last Act is devoted to track the planned extermination of *The Donnellys* by their neighours and also to bring to the fore the heroic nature of *The Donnellys* to cling on to their land and fight on. Perhaps, the dramatist puts on the onus on their fighting quality to build a new world packed with dignity and riches alike; a lesson equally valid for all 'bold builders'.

Reaney deliberately leaves meaningful empty spaces in the construction of this play and as such *Sticks and Stones* remains 'ever alive'. His own comment that there are a hundred plays in the Donnelly story is a revelation for the viewers of *The Donnellys* as well as any well-wrought history play. The genre transformation is at work here. This is a latent artistic possibility of supreme significance to posterity. The trend is already set. It will certainly gain more momentum in the years to come. Dead bones of history shape into a lore and

from the lays of the lore there emerge a play or series of plays. Reaney delineates the growth of Donnellys into *The Donnellys* in *Sticks and Stones* and the other two sections. Not only the tragic proportions to which The Donnellys are raised but their indomitable will to fight, should serve as a source of inspiration for the sagging spirit of the nuclear horror shocked 21st century.

Eugune Benson and L. W. Conolly observe: "The strength of the first part of *Sticks and Stones* lies in its exhilarating celebration of living and dying; charged with energy and passion, it is as much a documentary of rural life like a novel by George Eliot as an explanation why The Donnellys is affected when a specific political reason is attributed to their fall. Actually, Reaney has given the play a universal plank by weaving in the archetypal layer very imaginatively and effortlessly at least in the first part of the trilogy. "The reason for their death is in the text: Donnelly (like all the men of his family) is a god, a king, and the barely must be threshed to become whisky to be pissed against the wall. Historical explanation is at odds with the plays archetypal assertions. The Donnellys are outsiders, cursed, unexplainable, like Oediups or the Ancient Mariner" (Benson & Conolly, 78-79). This inherent conflict actually suggests an inescapable feature of the emerging new world. Out of these visible irreconcilables, there may arise 'a passable new world' today or tomorrow.

Still, for future generations *The Donnellys* will serve the purpose of a complex historical play indicating the metaphorical devices that could be employed gainfully in similar endeavours. Reaney is not flawless in the selection and dramatization of the Donnellys's story. Many critics charge him with "excesses: too many characters, too many incidents, too many places, too many styles" (Benson & Conolly, 79). However, his use of stage metaphors helps him to compress the trilogy and to give it a poetic depth, at least to a reasonable extent. In another way also his metaphors deserve attention, for they are mostly drawn from his domestic arena/personal realm-candles, shirts, stones, toys, branches, windows, dishes, ladders, strings and stars, quilts, coffins and Victorian hymns and tunes. Each object is a major motif in one or more parts of the trilogy. "Reaney uses these objects and images as catalysts to crystallize the super-saturated solutions of each play, precipitating out most of his basic themes and giving the audience ways of locating what occurs, when and where and how, in a trilogy which spans forty years, several dozen locations, over one hundred characters and which continuously juxtaposes cinematic and presentational dramatic conventions".

In Part II of *The St. Nicholas Hotel*, Reaney banks on sounds and a top as prime metaphors. By the end of Part I, II The Donnellys and their friends

are encircled and entrapped by the intricate rules of church and state. To begin with, in Part-II The Donnellys put on the air of champion top spinners. "Yet the energy and playfulness associated with tops is shadowed by the analogy of The Donnellys themselves spun by social and political forces beyond their control. Tops are small objects for play, not work. Yet, throughout Part II, their circular shape and motion are written large…" (Miller, 39). Form the movements upward or downward, behind or at front, i. e. linear, of the first part, in the second he makes the same quite amorphous. In the last section, Handcuffs, Reaney makes curtains his major stage metaphor. "Like tops and ladders, the billowing curtains appear in the other plays: for example, the flap of the clothesline in Pat I; the orange banners which separate Will and Maggie; and the image of Maggie enfolded in a net, in Part II, but they dominate Part III. Also, whenever curtains intervene our sight lines are fragmented. People are glimpsed, then disappear-a perfect analogy for the complex structure of the narrative of Handcuffs" (Miller, 39).

The brief analysis of *The Donnellys* reveals the relevance of Reaney as a playwright for posterity from many angles (1).The possibility of turning bones of cold historical/documentary facts into a pulsating myth and heightened drama. (ii) Application of multiple verbal structures – prose, poetry, song, ballad- easy transitions from one mode to the other. (iii) Optimum use of minimum stage properties. (iv) Use of stage metaphors. Certainly, *The Donnellys* will nurture many more such plays in the nursery of 21st century drama, in keeping with the imaginative leaps and potential challenges of the emerging new world.

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Situating Identity and Negotiating Culture : A Diasporic Reading of Michael OndaatJe's *Anil's Ghost*

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Pabitra Bharali.

Crisis of identity and search for identity have always been a subject of engaging interest for authors, scholars and critics regardless of time and place . Of late, contemporary discourses on diaspora , postcolonial studies and cultural studies have also added new dimensions to the treatment of identity precisely because essentialist construction of identity is being constantly contested and interrogated. To recall Homi K Bhaba(2010) ,identity is 'never fixed' and it necessitates constant cultural negotiation .Viewed in a similar perspective, the diasporic literatures are expressions of constant negotiation -of culture and identity of the diasporic persons .There is no denying the fact that search for identity and situating the cultural roots of the diasporic individuals are central to diaspora studies, since movement of an individual across national boundary also entails cultural movements as well as cultural confrontations.

The uprooted expatriate's concern for 'imagined homeland'(Rushdie:2010) , and his/her psychic oscillation between location\ dislocation and relocation are in fact expressions of the crisis of identity experienced by the diasporic person. The diasporic individual is traumatized not only by the loss of original home and culture, but also by the problems of relocation which is a herculean task in an alien land ,where he\she feels isolated and insecure ,and experiences the 'culture –shock' of being uprooted and hence bereft of identity. Unfortunately, the diasporic individual fails to relocate and

feels culturally cut off from the two worlds – the original homeland he\she has left and the alien land where he\she finds it extremely difficult to construct a new cultural identity. It is this cultural shock, involving the memory and trauma of the lost paradise that forces the diasporic person to search for a stable identity through a process of negotiation .

Cultural identities are not fixed but unstable, 'not an essence but a positioning' in so far as they constantly produce and reproduce 'themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (Hall: 120). This fluidity is the basis of diasporic identity since it refers to the 'hybrid', the 'third', 'in-between' space, i.e. the space which belongs neither to the 'native' nor to the 'new/alien', but to both. Edward Said (1994) focuses on the migrant's hybrid position calling him/her 'the political figure between domains/ forms/homes/languages' (403) ,while Bhaba (2010) sees borders as thresholds, 'in-between' spaces where identities can be recast and which "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood –singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (2).

As the issue of identity forms the core of diasporic consciousness, the diasporic person experiences three stages of development in his/her condition- from expatriation to an immigrant, and from the state of being a humiliated immigrant, the diasporic person searches for a new life/identity in the melting pot theory. In this attempt of self definition, the individual may either assimilate identity with the host country severing all ties with the country of his/her root, or may see the people around him/her as the 'other.' Within cultural assimilation and cultural alienation, an expatriate tries to adjust and depict such confusions of life and living and submits to the new environment by adopting the strategy of excessive belonging. Diasporic communities constantly negotiate their identities within the borders of their adopted home as well as across borders with their homeland. In this connection Cohen (2010) refers to the 'collective identity' of the diasporic people in respect of 'an imagined – or real homeland' as well as to their sense of 'solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries' (7). Identities and cultures get transformed and delocalized across space and time, but the immigrants are seldom detached from the memory of home which though 'a place of no return' remains as 'a mythic place of desire' (Brah: 192). Although differences exist, all diasporic people negotiate their identities between homelands and adopted home with their oscillating sense of belonging to both homes/cultures. To come to a point, 'many in the diaspora have adopted to a form of dual consciousness' (Cohen: 15).

With the 'dual' consciousness and being (re-)located in 'in-between'

spaces, the diasporic individual achieves a plural identity. The consciousness to assert ethnic identity while accepting/assimilating in the new cultures promotes the sense of multiculturalism in the diasporic mind. The diasporic consciousness grows to a multicultural consciousness of 'tolerance and respect for Difference' (Brooker: 144). While globalization and technological developments have eroded geographical/national boundaries on the one hand, on the other, they have promoted communication between members of the diasporic communities. In the new world order, homeland becomes at once remote and accessible; and diasporic communities remain local and provincial even after acquiring transnational characteristics.

Diasporic writings "disrupt the binary of local and global and problematize national, racial and ethnic formulations of identity" (Ashcroft et. al: 218). The diasporic writer stands at a 'liminal', 'hybrid' 'in-between' space of exile and cultural solitude or perpetual tension plagued with cultural antagonism .He/she begins by mapping the contours of his/her cultural position, i.e. identity as 'translated men' (Rushdie:2010).

In the backdrop of the aforesaid theoretical framework on the issue of diasporic identity, an attempt has been made in this paper to critique Philip Michael Ondaatje's treatment of the notion of identity in one of his major fictional works i.e., *Anil's Ghost (2000)*.

Ondaatje's (b. 1943) writings bring out his diasporic consciousness in very many ways. His fictional creations bespeak his concerns as a diasporic writer and focus on his idea of home and his memory of the homeland,while commenting on human predicament resulting from migration and cultural dislocation. In his works, Ondaatje examines the problematics of identity and cultural conflicts, of alienation, trauma and rootlessness of diasporas.

Ondaatje in *Anil's Ghost* addresses issues of ethnicity and identity and the shifts in individual identity of the central character Anil Tissera constitute the core of the novel which presents the problematic of one's ethnicity and identity in today's world. Sri Lanka born Tissera is a UN forensic scientist who has come back all the way from USA to investigate 'extrajudicial executions'.

The novel is conceived of in the backdrop of a gruesome civil war during the 1980s in Sri Lanka. Ondaatje writes: "*From the Mid-1980s to the early 1990s, Sri Lanka was in a crisis that involved three essential groups: the government, the antigovernment insurgents in the south and the separatist guerrillas in the north. Both the insurgents and the separatists had declared war on the government. Eventually, in response, legal and illegal government*

squads were known to have been sent out to hunt down the separatists and the insurgents. / Anil's Ghost is a fictional work set during this political time and historical moment." (Author's note).

Anil's Ghost exemplifies the problematic of ethnicity and identity. In fact, Anil's "in-between" location facilitates the ethical problematic reflecting Ondaatje's diasporic nationalist concerns. His discourse of human rights not only elicits political and ethical responses to Sri Lanka, but also shows frustration resulting from its application to a particular nation-state context. After Sri Lanka's independence, the Tamils and the Sinhalese found themselves engaged in "a tryst with destiny," whereas the local descendants felt marginalized and insecure. Anil is showcased as an agent and victim of colonial hegemony as well. She epitomizes the problematics of ethnicity and identity and tends to integrate her individual identity with Sri Lankan ethnicity to establish her role in the history of Sri Lanka. In her scheme of things, to be refused a role in history is to be denied the very basis of identity. The problematic arises in denying or endorsing Anil's claim of belongingness to the country of her root. Throughout the novel, Anil fights with an urge to be associated with the island which she cannot fully belong to; her association with the island is sometimes decided by herself and at other times by the native Sri Lankans. She articulates her sense of belongingness when she says to Sarath, "*This isn't just "another job"! I decided to come back. I wanted to come back."* (196). She positions herself with the island when she tries to make her case to the government on her discovery of the "Sailor". She says, "*I think you murdered hundreds of us*"(269). But, immediately after the dialogue with the government officials when Anil senses danger, she concludes, '*she wouldn't be staying here much longer, there was no wish in her to be here anymore*' (280). The unsolved question is-'does Anil lack or is she forced to feel the lack of the sense of belongingness to Sri Lanka?'

Anil's attempt to establish her Sri Lankan identity explains Ondaatje's need to establish a niche for himself in Sri Lanka, which appears time and again with obsessive insistence in his work.

The title of the novel has multiple connotations. The ghost may refer to Anil's struggle to unify her past in Sri Lanka and America with her present life thereby reminding the role of memory in diasporic studies. The ghost may also refer to 'Sailor', Sailor's murderer, the motivation driving Anil for the investigation, ghosts of civil war deaths, Sarath [as Ondaatje writes- "*He (Ananda) and the woman Anil would always carry the ghost of Sarath Diyasena"*(301)], as well as Anil herself. The title in this way implies the need

of identity construction in very many ways.

Names and namelessness are central to Ondaatje's problematizing of identity (Kailasam:41). A name is an identity. According to Ondaatje, "the use of names may give an air of authenticity". (Ondaatje-*Running*: 232) Names are vested with the power to distinguish, substantiate and confirm. Above all they confer identity thereby authenticating and establishing identification. A name may locate a person, because to be named is synonymous with the act of locating oneself. Naming the unknown/unnamed has been presented in the novel as a motif. The central quest of the novel is to find out the true identity of the skeleton named 'Sailor' that Anil and her colleague Sarath discovered in an ancient burial ground under government protection. The discovery hints government's involvement in the killing. Hence the discovery means danger, yet Anil is determined to complete the job. Anil thinks that by finding out Sailor's name she would be able to locate all those who 'Sailor' represents. She says, "*And who was this skeleton? …. This representative of all those lost voices? To give him a name would name the rest."*(52) In this sense, to be nameless is to be without identity, a lost voice. The lost voice must be named and identified by another person. Anil uses a slippery hypothesis and identifies the skeleton to be that of a miner, a man named Ruwan Kumara. "Sailor" represents the nameless that rely on others to locate them.

Ondaatje has fore-grounded the act/fact of naming of the central character. The tension between naming and situating an identity is brought out in a very marked manner through the character of Anil Tissera.

Anil is a forensic anthropologist who is born in Sri Lanka, but is western educated. She returns to the island after fifteen years to investigate 'unknown extrajudicial executions' (14) on behalf of the United Nations and works with the local Sri Lankan archeologist Sarath Diyasena. Ondaatje depicts Anil as someone who constantly rebels against categorization and restricting herself to one form of identity. As a forensic anthropologist, she is constantly on the move. The first move in this process is leaving Sri Lanka for England for her studies. It is stated that she has adopted the masculine name 'Anil' from her brother; that she was a well-known swimmer when she was young and resists being called/ identified by that label when she is back in the island. Ondaatje states:

"She had been given two entirely inappropriate names and very early began to desire 'Anil' which was her brother's unused second name. She had tried to buy it from him when she was twelve years old, offering to support him in all family arguments…. she wanted the name more than anything else….

she stopped responding when called by either of her given names….finally the siblings worked out a trade between them …. After that she allowed no other first names on her passports or school reports or application forms. Later when she recalled her childhood, it was the hunger of not having that name and the joy of getting it that she remembered most. Everything about the name pleased her, its slim, stripped-down quality, its feminine air, even though it was considered a male name. Twenty years later she felt the same about it. She'd hunted down the desired name like a specific lover she had seen and wanted, tempted by nothing else along the way". (63-64).

Ondaatje has shown that Anil adopted the masculine name to rebel against categorization and blur the gender lines. By blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity, Anil seems to take on a syncretic gender construction that blurs the traditional ideas of gender. Significantly, Anil does not choose the name randomly, rather she desires one that she is associated with, one that belongs both to her brother and her grandfather that she has never known, one that reaffirms her genealogy. Anil's action by asserting her independence and liberating her 'self' reaffirms her identification with her ancestry and assimilates her origins into a new persona. Thus Anil's name is one that is multiple (incorporating origins and ancestry), contradictory (infusing both masculinity and femininity) and fragmented (because of her contact with the west).

Ondaatje perceives identity as a construct and ongoing process. This is brought out in the naming of Sailor's identity as well as in the naming of Anil's own identity. When names are conferred by others, the validity of this sort of identification is deliberately left open- ended and ambivalent at the end of the novel. This is the case with Sailor whose real name is hypothetically conceived to be Ruwan Kumara. On the other hand, when one names oneself, as in the case of Anil herself, identity is shown to be well-thought and as a fissured construct that infuses a variety of elements that come into consideration and are considered. In this sense Ondaatje's construction of identity parallels Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a 'process' rather than a 'product' (Hall: 110).

For Ondaatje, names and identities are not fixed entities, but cultural and ideological constructions. Through choosing a new name for herself, Anil takes on a new identity; she becomes a "stranger" to her past "self"." We are not told the name she was known by for the first twelve years of her life. In fact, prior to becoming Anil, she remains un-identified; missing a name, she is akin to the nameless skeleton "Sailor." In acquiring her name Anil snaps the boundary between the "Self" and the "Other." She does not merely take on a new mask or disguise, but recreates herself. In this way, Ondaatje's treatment

of the connection between naming and identities with relationship to Sailor and Anil indicate his perception of identity as a construct and ongoing process.

Ondaatje also presents the problematics of situating a homeland. *Anil's Ghost* presents the instability of personal and religious identities. The question 'where do you come from?' naturally brings the question of origins and of original belonging. The issues of origin in the process relate to the act of naming and construction of identity. But if the creations of public, personal and national identities are on-going processes as shown by Ondaatje, situating the sense of belongingness to the homeland is problematic indeed. The fact of LTTE's participation in the war for the creation of a separate Tamil homeland interrogates the very sense of belongingness to homeland. Of course, this debate remains here since in the novel no other Tamil character is present except Anil's ayah, Lalitha.

The problematic of settling the host and the guest in the context of civil war leads to the problematic of situating the migrant who returns to his/her homeland. This problematic applies to Anil. Her sense of belongingness to the homeland of her origin is questionable since she oscillates between her roles as 'host' and 'guest'. Various perspectives of Anil's belongingness and dislocation in Sri Lanka are presented in the novel. The fact of Anil's absence in Sri Lanka for fifteen years establishes her distance from the soil of her root especially because the duration also means her absence in her soil of root during the trouble time of the civil war. Again, the question "*You were born here, no*?'(5) reinforces her migrant status: she was born in Sri Lanka but she chose to leave it for the period that covered the nation's violent internal conflict. The fact that Anil speaks only a little Sinhala further accentuates the tension inherent in her position of the returned migrant. Her inquiry about Gabriel's saloon indicates that her knowledge is not up-to-date.

Throughout the novel Anil shuttles between her position of the host and the guest. Though she once blurts out '*This isn't just another job, I decided to come back. I wanted to come back' (196)*, shortly it is discovered that she had no intention to stay back. Anil cannot confine herself to the position of the host for long. She positions herself with the island when she tries to make her case to the govt. about her discovery of the sailor: '*I think you murdered hundreds of us (*269)' Sarath's observation at this moment can be taken as sarcastic: '*Hunderds of us. Fifteen years and she is finally with us'*. (269)

After her dialogue with government officials when Anil senses danger for her, she says '*she wouldn't be staying here much longer, there was no wish in*

her to be here anymore, there was blood everywhere'(280). Anil is thus neither a guest nor a host, but an outsider and a westerner. Before leaving the island she articulates this identity of hers while appreciating Sarath's and Gemini's determination to stay in the island: "No *westerner could understand the love they had for the island"*. (282) And yet, it is not certain whether Anil really wants to be realigned with the west.

Ondaatje presents the problematic of Anil's identity via language also. The fact Anil has forgotten/not used her root/original language Sinhala for couple of years problematizes her citizenship in Sri Lanka. (Sanghera: *CLCweb*). Anil's "*last conversation in Sinhala was the distressed chat she'd had with [her ayah], Lalitha ... that ended with her crying about missing egg rulang and curd with jaggery ... [and Lalitha] weeping, it felt, at the far ends of the world"* (141, 138). This last, tear-filled talk in her mother tongue is a costly one. The issue of language again problematizes Anil's identity, questions her belongingness to Sri Lanka. Viewed from primordialist notion, she is not in a position to claim her ethnic identity.

Anil's Ghost can be said to basically exemplify transnational identity. Here Ondaatje explores, in depth, the conflicts and contradictions of people having a colonial past and a post-colonial present. Reflecting the cultural clashes resulting from the interweaving of nationalities, histories, and border divisions, *Anil's Ghost* provides an examination of transnational identity in the central character.

As a post-colonial literature of "resistance", the novel challenges the traditional perceptions of "Self" and "Other," incorporating and transgressing boundaries. Anil transgresses the conventional notions of identity and boundaries of gender and position. However, terms like post-modern and postcolonial fall short of the multivalent integration of ideologies and cultures forming Anil's life. She has a transnational perspective; she does indeed cross and re-cross many ideological boundaries, but she does so as a migrant returning to her once colonial homeland. Ondaatje indicates that the origination of her trans-nationalism is the breaking of a taboo (the possible incest of Anil with her brother for the sake of the name); to become transnational involves the transgression of the boundaries between insider and outsider, national and international. The examination of Ondaatje's work from a transnational approach uncovers some of the clashes that occur between national cultures and the ambivalence inherent in a multicultural identity such as that of Anil's.

Anil Tissera occupies a "dis-located" position in terms of her name,

her nationality and her family. She is written out of Sri Lanka: "*Doors that should be open are closed (40)*. She goes to offices, but can't get in. She is not considered a citizen. "She is in a space where things constantly curl" (Sanghera: *CLC web*). In problematizing notions of individual identity, Ondaatje explores the concept of "Self" as something constructed. In other words, Ondaatje reveals Anil's transnational nature as being a continually changing mixture of a variety of cultures, which incorporates, encompasses and contains various fragments in one unified being. He examines anxieties about the way in which we construct our own personal identity in terms of name, language and culture. Ondaatje's need has been to move beyond fixed expressions of identification and construct identity in the "veritable maze of globalized spaces in-between — not between the 'West' and 'the rest'…, but between innumerable intertwined histories" (Cook: 13). Ondaatje focuses on the complications arising in multicultural reality. He is involved in re-defining the boundaries, speaking from beyond preconceptions of "the other" and "writing back" to "the West," and reconfiguring the "postcolonial" perspective into one of "trans-nationalism." From a transnational perspective Ondaatje constructs Anil's personal identity as one that defines the individual in terms of a "state" of "self-hood"; thus the private persona stands as a figurative representation of nation, and as such individual identity is subject to the effects of trans-nationalism. "Anil's Ghost represents and regulates diasporic identity" (Harting *web*).

The central character Anil is an altered self and altered voice. She is a westernized forensic scientist and UN spokesperson traveling on a British passport who no longer speaks Sinhala. Returning to Sri Lanka after fifteen years as an outsider she turns to the western world to center her; she adopted a masculine name and she has been a voice breaking the silence of imperialist discourse. Her post-colonial voice does not simply speak from the margins, but represents an integrated component of a transnational identity. Anil's gesture is not only assertive, but also liberating and self-creating. These facts render her antithesis of Gayatri Spivak's subaltern woman. Anil's refusal to acknowledge her identity as the early celebrity (as swimmer) can indicate her rise from the sub-alternity.

Through his novel *Anil's Ghost*, Ondaatje problematizes notions of individual and national identity as being fixed and immutable and adopts a perspective that considers such boundaries as both flexible and permeable. Ondaatje's novel presents identity as both a construct and a process. While examining identity as reflective of cultural clashes and interweaving of nationalities, histories and border divisions, Ondaatje in *Anil's Ghost* argues

names and naming to be important issues of identification. Ondaatje seems to indicate three phases in Anil's acculturation: initial cultural and individual identity dependant on parents, the independent phase signified by her adoption of different name and different culture, and the phase of interdependency when she grows transnational.

Ondaatje, in dealing with the issue of individual identity, has foregrounded the act of naming which he has presented in the history of the protagonist's name, Anil, as well as in the mission she has taken as a forensic anthropologist. He has shown that name is a very important aspect of identity construction. Loss of name indicates the crisis of identity. Anil's original name is erased from her story and thus her former identity is lost to her; Anil even tries to erase from her memory her former (adolescent) identity of the swimmer. A name means a power, a rise from the state of silence/ alternity to the dominant voice. The fact that Anil was not content with, i.e. wanted to change her original name and that she desires her brother's name might imply her earnestness for a place in history. The importance of naming is that it can establish an identity.

Ondaatje has presented the problematic of construction of identity of the individual migrating in language, space and time and more importantly in the sense of belongingness. The flux of migrancy leads to the fluidity and the problematic of identity. Anil's loss of original language (Sinhala), her use of male name, her physical travels from Sri Lanka to US via England, her development from the swimmer to the scientist and her swinging sense of belongingness to her homeland and the West and the international authority, her role as a victim and an agent of colonial hegemony - all these contribute to the problematics of her identity. While tenaciously trying to negotiate various ideologies and cultures through the many-sided experiences and cultural shock\ encounters of his protagonist, Ondaatje has successfully problematized name and language, location and homeland ,identity and ethnicity ,nationality and transnationality thereby leaving sufficient scope for analysis and interpretation of his novels in terms of trans-nationalism and multiculturalism .

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Application of Rasa Theory to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

J.Sheela Rani

The prime mission of this paper is to delineate the application of Rasa Theory in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea.* Hemingway's well acclaimed and master-piece *The Old Man and the Sea,* according to the *Rasa theory* would be centrally revealed various emotions related to courage and wonder. Hence, in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* , *Vira rasa* (the heroic rasa) and its accompanying emotions *Utsaha* (energy) and *adbhuta rasa* (wonder). According to *Natya Sastra,* prior to the state of permanency (*Sthayibhava*) being achieved an intermediary state is to be seen.

Hemingway played an active role in World War II. After the war he returned to Cuba to fish. In *The Old Man and the Sea* **,** Hemingway identified himself with the old fishermen Santiago who bravely fights against natural sources far more powerful than himself.

In *The Old Man and the Sea* **,** Santiago is more or less a lonely old man who, when the story opens, has been deprived even of the company of the boy Manolin. It has been emphasized by some critics that the first eight words of the novel, "He was an old man who fished alone ....." (*OMS.* 5) refer to a world in which man's isolation is the most insistent truth. When the novel begins, Santiago leaves the human world to go "far out" (*OMS.* 25) and "Beyond all people in the world" (*OMS.* 48). Alone on the vast ocean, he is embarked on a grim struggle though he is not aware of it yet. He watches the fishes of the sea and the birds that fly above the water lovingly. Fondly he watches the flying fish and the delicate birds thinking. "The birds have harder life than we do except for the robber birds and the heavy strong ones, why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel?" (*OMS.* 26)

But he loves the sea too, for all her cruelty. The old man feels at a disadvantage being old and alone, and absolutely without provisions. He wishes the boy that with him should and forever reflects, "no one should be alone in their old age" (A History of American Literature.339). But not for a moment does he think of letting the fish go. 'Fish' he said softly aloud, 'I'll stay with you until I am dead.' (*OMS.* 50). The tussel with the fish gives him great admiration for his adversary. Victory becomes important to the old man because he has to justify his manhood. "I'll show him what a man can do and what a man endures" (A History of American Literature.339).

As the grim's fight continues, weariness gets the better of him and a stage is reached when the old man does not care for the outcome.

> You are killing me, fish, the old man thought, But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing, thank you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who. (*OMS.* 92)

The old man Santiago is a real fisherman. Santiago's struggle with the fish represents a man's struggle with the life and the Universe. In this battle with the environment it is not the victory or the end which matters. The old man's Marlin has been eaten away by the fierce sharks which have been clubbed and harpooned by the old man. He is exhausted and fatigued and left only with the skeleton. But what is important is that he has braved the difficulties and struggles with the circumstances to achieve his object. Moreover, the old man has attained certain virtues - valour, dignity and humility. He is conscious of the fact that man has not been made for defeat. In his voyage on the high seas, he has cultivated many more virtues. In his adversity, he has developed a fellow-feeling for the fishes, and the birds of the Gulf Stream. He has learnt more lessons and has imbibed fortitude, endurance and humility.

The pain that the old man suffers in the story is not his personal pain, It is rather the pain of the process of being alive. In his struggle man can only lose, but lose in such a way that his loss has dignity and he attains his victory through the loss. He repeats, 'I'll fight them until I die' (*OMS.* 116) 'You better be fearless and confident yourself old man' (*OMS.* 83). He said 'I will try it once again' (*OMS.* 93) 'And pain does not matter to a man' (*OMS.* 84).

In this novel Santiago is determined to show what a man is and what he can endure. "Be calm and strong, old man" (*OMS.* 90), he said "May be this time I can get him over" (*OMS.* 91). He asks God to give endurance.

> 'I could not fail myself and die on a fish like this' he said, 'Now that I have him coming so beautifully, God help me endure. I'll say a hundred Our Father and a hundred Hail Mary's'. (*OMS.* 87)

In his struggle, man always loses but his loss gives a sense of dignity on his part. Santiago's persistence is revealed. He is a fighter whose best days are behind him. His courage, determination and his self-confidence is great. He never loses his self-determination. He will not quit when he is licked. Santiago amidst his outer and inner conflicts, remains undefeated.

> In the *Natya Sastra* it is said (VI.97):
>
> *Vira rasa* is properly acted out by firmness. patience, heroism, pride, dynamic energy, bravery, might, and profound emotions. (*Aesthetic Rapture*, Vol.I.54)

These are the qualities that a character manifests in *vira rasa*. "Heroism" and "pride" are related. In fact, pride can often manifest itself as "arrogance" and in that case would not be "heroism" anymore. The "pride" indicated here is the pride at one's skill, a pride that is necessary for self esteem. The pride of the old man is such – it is born of faith in oneself and is paradoxically integrated with humility:

> He was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride. (*OMS.* 10)

But the key words here are "firmness" and "patience". It is these that are usually not recognized as of primary importance in any heroic act. But they are so, for without them one will act rashly. "Firmness" indicates steadiness of purpose and a conviction that one's action is right. "Patience" later can lead to humility. Both these aspects are amply evinced in the old man. His ceaseless struggle with the fish, his strong determination to catch it indicate his firmness. And from his patience, he learns much more than mere skill. He learns humility. ■

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Bhima Bhoi:
The Poet Laureate of Dalit Protest Literature

Rajendra Kumar Dash

The growing popularity of Dalit literature as a serious socio-political and socio-cultural discourse in India has, ironically enough, not only earned it the tag as a protest literature *per se* but has also raised concerns regarding its credentials on two grounds — on the socio-economic front and aesthetic forefront. It is often observed that in Dalit Literature the sociopolitical ideology (i.e., 'dalit') has monotonously superimposed itself on the medium (i.e., 'literature'), of course not without justifications; this ground reality has not only given such a genre of literature its identity but has also delimited its boundaries, including the literary boundary. That is to say, the message has more or less undermined the medium and in the process Dalit literature has become more a journalistic literature than a pure literature. Consequently, the content has dominated, or it appears so, the form. It is true that Dalit literature is a finer expression of Dalit identity, which has a long past but uncertain future, for in the post-Independent India polarization in the name of caste is not tenable and there is no certainty that a person whose ancestors were 'dalits' would himself or herself continue to be a dalit. The very two foundations on which the dalit identity has greatly hinged upon — casteism (exclusion from the echelon of caste or oppression from higher castes) and economic status (a variable in itself as an individual or a community can become richer in a democratic set-up where equal opportunities are available to all) — are crumbling and though dalit movements are all set to roll on for quite some decades in India, they won't be able to enrich Dalit literature even though they will help in sustaining it. I believe that what Dalit movements have gained by making Dr B. R. Ambedkar as their chief ideologue, Dalit literature (mostly in the modern phase) has lost much in the process. To be more explicit, the Ambedkar phenomenon has helped 'dalits'

regain an aspiring identity but it has much to contribute to the exclusive and partisan nature of most Dalit writing, insomuch as making it a protest literature. Consequent upon this development, Dalit literature has not been able to rub shoulders with the "mainstream literature" and is often viewed as a marginal (nor marginalized) literature. In the backdrop of such developments, this paper argues that since the foundation of Dalit literature is based on a great paradox, it should broaden its scope by becoming more inclusive and more humanistic in approach while continuing with its trademark banner of protest. In order to do this, Dalit literature needs to trace its literary and aesthetic roots as such a review will render it more humane, more inclusive, and more authentic. This paper proposes that if the dalits have accepted Valmiki, the versifier of *The Ramayan*, as their representative writer, then the inclusive, pluralistic, and aesthetic message propounded by the great author, who in all possibilities is the father of Dalit Literature, must not be relegated into oblivion. However, this paper will not focus on the great tradition of Dalit literature, which would have otherwise considered writers like Sarala Das (Odia *Mahabharat),* Balaram Das (*The Laxmi Purana)*, etc. The focus of this paper is Bhima Bhoi, the nineteenth century, dalit and adivasi poet, who is a great visionary poet. This paper calls upon the Dalit literary movements in Odisha, present or future, to make Bhima Bhoi a rallying point by accepting him as a model based on purely literary, artistic, and aesthetic merits of his work.

The raising of voice against social evils is the true identity of Dalit writing, be it purely biographical or autobiographical or even fictional realism. As literary tradition in this genre reveals, it is a protest against caste oppressions, violation of human rights, and against the perpetration of atrocities manmade but passed as divine rule, etc. Protest is the hallmark of Dalit literature, but whether the protest is dominatingly personal or general, it has always become the prerogative of the writer concerned. It can be observed that most of the Dalit writing with purely personal content has often "degenerated" into journalistic flavor whereas general writing has been able to touch the nerves of the beleaguered masses. That kind of writing which has combined both personal and social outbursts and simultaneously informative yet dominatingly literary, wherein a sense of aesthetics has helped wed the matter with manner (what Matthew Arnold called Grand style) — that kind of writing is not absent in Indian Dalit writing, but that kind of writing has been, so to say, scarce. Bhima Bhoi's writing is of this rare breed. Further, when most of the post-Independence Dalit writing in India has a background of the awareness of constitutional parity, enforceable human rights, facilities for employment, a hyperactive media

and social (media) networking, and particularly when caste rules are giving in under the teeth of egalitarian regimes, there has been exponential growth in Dalit writing, but has Dalit literature marked corresponding growth in its literary merit? This researcher feels that social movements for Dalit rights have always capture a centre stage while Dalit literature has suffered in isolation. It is because the protests have assumed a political dimension and has an exclusive agenda. Even though they have appeared to create mass awareness, they have nonetheless failed to become mass movements or having the active support of the masses. More often than not, absurdity has coloured some Dalit protests as happened in some Delhi universities where some "Dalit youths" protested Durga Puja by dubbing the goddess as a villain and celebrated Mahishasura as the hero. Further, the scope to break away from the Hindu system has further weakened the Dalit movement and has often relegated it to an eco-political issue at best. In this context, it would be quite interesting to find out how Bhima Bhoi could espouse a personal as well as a social cause, and how he could get into great literary height in his works.

No discussion on Bhima Bhoi's contribution to Dalit literature will be fruitful without taking into account the socio-cultural milieu of his time and his place in it. Bhima Bhoi was born in a village called Jatasingha in the then kingdom of Sonepur in 1895 (now in Odisha, India) and died in 1895 a village called Khaliapali of the same region. A Kandha couple — Danar and his wife Gurubari — adopted Bhima, who was abandoned by his parents. As ill luck would have it, he was deprived of the love and affection of his foster parents also, under unfortunate circumstances. From the age of seven till the end of eleven, he lived the life of a tramp. From his autobiographical poem *Stuti Chintamani*, it is understood that he spend several years, seven to fourteen, depending on begging, tending cattle, and by doing menial labour at well-to-do families. His writings indicate that he was a child prodigy even as he was endowed with poetic talents. He took to versification seriously at the age of sixteen, inspired by the initiation in Mahima Dharma from Mahima Gosain. From the age of sixteen up to his death at forty-five, Bhima Bhoi went on producing a number of poetic works of art: *Adianta Gita*, *Astak Bihari Gita*, *Shruti Nishedha Gita*, *Nirved Sadhan*, *Padma Kalpa*, etc. When after almost hundred years of his birth, the Odisha Sahitya Academy celebrated Bhima Bhoi's birth centenary in 1996, his contribution to the field of literature was officially acknowledged. Literary critics have recognized him as a pioneer of the Modern Age of Odia Literature, which succeeded the Reeti Yuga of the great poet Upendra Bhanja. A first hand reading of Bhima Bhoi's writings establish him as a dalit poet protesting against

the social evils of his time, one of the founders of the Mahima Dharma, a social and religious reformer, a revolutionary tribal, a spiritual leader, and a man of character who had the courage of conviction to withstand slanders and answer his detractors boldly. All these aspects of his personality go into the making of the iconoclastic Dalit literature Bhima Bhoi is the creator — characterized with universal humanism, protest against human rights violation, fighting against the corrupt system within the circle of system, and literary aesthetics of a transcendental nature. It is all that makes him at once a mover and shaker of Odia literature.

We cannot ignore the dalit background Bhima Bhoi was born in and inherited while discussing his merits as a literary champion. As we see, the adivasi boy had carried on his struggle to keep his body and soul together starting from his formative years. Hunger and thirst was his constant companion and so was insult as people of his tribe were subjected to by the people of the upper caste of the Hindu society. Bhima Bhoi was much pained to see these wrong and inhuman practices of the upper caste Hindu but we are astonished that he has dealt with the subject with sympathy rather than looking back at it in anger. The struggle for mundane existence continued till he became sixteen and things started changing after he met his spiritual guru Mahima Gosain. Poverty did not allow him to take to formal studies, yet his literary works show his felicity with language, philosophy and vision which will make a scholar curious as to how he could get them. In my opinion, this can be contributed to the oral literary tradition of the day, when literacy was basically oral. This is how his dalit background could not prevent him from being an erudite in that sense. The fact that his disciples wrote down his writings which he dictated confirms my assertion. What made this dalit boy take up the issue of human rights in his literary works?

In mid-nineteenth century, the social milieu Bhima Bhoi was born in was in no way less similar to a medieval society. The Hindu religion was getting suffocated under its own pressure. Casteism was at its worst, and the very broadness which is typical of the Hindu religious practice was obeyed in digression. The atrocities of the Brahmins on the so-called lower castes and their own non-religious and anti-spiritual practices had degenerated the Hindu society. Superstition in the name of religion had become the order of the day. As religion had always ruled the social system, this degeneration corrupted the society at large. One can say that at that time it was the also the condition of India in general. At this crossroads, when there was a crisis engulfing the society, religion and culture, this dalit's bold revolutionary inroads into the

social, cultural, religious and literary spheres was benevolent. How could Bhima Bhoi achieve such an extraordinary feat?

After getting initiation from Mahima Gosain, the founder of Mahima Dharma, Bhima Bhoi pioneered this new religion as a reformist movement. It was of course a religious movement within the fold o Hinduism itself. Bhima Bhoi became the mouth-piece of Mahima dharma and spread the message. He pleaded for one God in place of millions of gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon. He ought against casteism as it was dehumanizing, debilitating, and anti-social. This religion accepted both male and female as equals and recognized their right to get initiation, give initiation and propagate the religion irrespective of caste, gender, and income level. It may be observed that Bhima Bhoi did not convert himself into another religion; on the other hand, he faught the fault in the system from within, much like Buddha, Socrates, Jeusus, etc. Bhima Bhoi travelled from place to place propagating the new religion and it spread into several districts in Odisha, mainly Sambalpur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Rayagada, and Chattisgarh. As of today, we see its influence in entire Odisha. His literary writing became his mouth organ of this new religion of humanism.

Bhima Bhoi was a house holder. He was married and blessed with a son and daughter. Bu this did not confine him to the life of an ordinary householder. On the other hand, his life was based on the principle of simple living and high thinking. In his literary works, there is a determined effort to rescue the common man from the confines of superstition, false identity, and conservatism. In his attempt to spread the message of humanism, he was accused of being a convert into Christianity, and he was driven out from places because of his unconventional views, the disciple of a Mohemmedan, etc (see *Stuti Chintamani*, verses 1-19). However, all these rumours could not bind him. On the other hand, he was pained at the irreligious practices in the name of religion in the famous pilgrimage centres like Kashi, Puri, etc. (95 Boli). It was but natural that Bhima Bhoi tried to rescue the dalits from the despotism of the priests, who exploited them in the name of Hinhu religion. Neither Mahima dharma, nor its pioneer Bhima Bhoi, was against Hinduism; they were against the corruption of the Hindu society.

Evidences are there that organized meeting were held by people against Bhima Bhoi and Mahima Dharma. He was lampooned and his detractors also indulged in his character assassination, the unfailing weapon of the envious. In one of his writings, Bhima Bhoi deplores (translation is mine): “They say I have deceived another person’s son to be loyal to me as a son; that I have made people abandon their rules of caste; that I have got married by resorting to

deception; that I have become a guru even while being a householder." Bhima Bhoi made a rejoinder: "I do not understand why these people are disturbed! If I am blessed with spouse and children, it is because I was destined to. This is the fruit of action. Without karma (action) and bhagya (destiny), can it be possible?" Bhima answered his critics in the very language they understood the best. But what is great in him that he had no intention to harm them; he was pained at their ignorance. Forgiving was his nature. In his own words, he put on the slanders as one puts on a dress (*Stuti Chintamani 62 Boli).* Principles like non-violence, truthfulness, hatred for lies, non-stealing, etc. are the bedrocks of Bhima Bhoi's philosophy of life and literature. The quintessence of his writing has been expressed in his famous two lines :

> "How can I witness the woes my fellow humans are a prey,
> Let the world live happily even at the cost of my life, I pray."
> (*Stuti Chintamani, Boli 27: "Mo Jiban Pachhe Narke Padithau ...")*

Bhima Bhoi was a dalit poet. He was not a practitioner of revenge literature, even though he was a pioneer of protest literature. Social welfare, nor division, was his message. Empathy is the source of his humanism; divine origin of man is his conviction; indifference is his revenge on enemies; sweetness is the strength of his literary craftsmanship; and 'karunya' (sympathy) is the inspiration of his poetic vision. Will the writers of Indian Dalit Literature make Bhima Bhoi their ideal? ■

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SHORT-STORY

Gopia, the Living Legend

Original in Odiya - Paresh Kumar Patnaik
Translation: Ipsita Sarangi & Harekrushna Das

Whenever we do not find any interest in games, we gather to gossip and Gopia Pana invariably occupies all our gossip. At that time Gopia was a living legend .A famous thief. He had so much reputation as a thief that numerous fascinating tales about him would keep spreading everywhere, and get discussed in our afternoon meetings.

Radhakant says, "Heard about Gopia's latest adventure, I just listened it from my uncle". Hairs raised, we shudder with a peculiar sensation; and look at Radhakant with wide eyes .Radhakant begins his tale.

Gopia went on his mission to steal from a house. The man was a zamindar . A lot of gold and sliver jewelry in his house. Gopia had earlier planned for the theft. He displayed a notice at the end of the village mentioning the date when he would accomplish his mission. The zamindar informed the police. The police force was deployed to keep a vigil on the house from all sides . Evening came, night set in and then mid-night. Radhakant paused there to take rest. We all looked at his face with wide eyes. A strange sensation overwhelmed our beings, and an unknown fear had slowly begun to surround us. Impatiently I said, "Tell, what happened then?"

Radhakant resumed his story.

Night was getting deeper. The police force were vigilant around the zamindar's house. Whistles were being blown. Bright torch light everywhere. Night was getting deeper. All of us impatient by that time shouted unitedly, just tell, what happened .

Radhakant said, “What happened? Then the night gradually began to end. It became dawn.”

We all looked disappointed.

With obvious disappointment in my voice I told,”It means Gopia didn’t come . He failed!”.

A bit annoyed Radhakanta said,”Hey! Listen the entire story first, why do you hurry, eh?”

All others stared at me. I requested Radhakant to finish this story soon. Assuming the importance of a better informed person, Radhakant continued the story.

Gradually morning set in, the police came to rest happily with the consolation that Gopia didn’t come. But the senior police officer was dumbfounded when he entered the zamindar’s house. Someone had tied the zamindar to a pole; his treasury broken and all his money and jewelry stolen.

We all asked,”Who did that? And how?”

Radhakant told comfortably , “Who else would ? That same Gopia had done it .”

We asked with a little disbelief and suspicion, “The police had surrounded the house . How could Gopia do it ?”

Now Radhakant smiled ,”That is Gopia’s speciality. Vigilant police everywhere, but he would do his job.”

We all clapped with a short of glorious excitement . The hero of such incredible or exaggerated tales was Gopia , who would always come to steal with a prior notice, hoodwink the police and escape .

Some other day Sisir came with a new tale about Gopia . As we sat eagerly around him, he began his story. “Gopia had secretly gone to attend someone’s marriage”.

“In the day time or at night?”, we asked him promptly.

“At night .Moved among others, gossiped with them, and even ate the feast among all.”

Our eyes become wide with reasons inexpressible.

Sisir continued, “It was the marriage of the daughter of a friend of his”.

"He had promised to attend the marriage. You know, he always keeps his words; so he arrived. It was about nine in the evening. But nobody could know how he came there. No one else had come with him".

We were all speechless, filled with consternation.

I asked, "The police could not know?

And now Sisir unravelLed the sensational episode of his story, "Yes the police somehow came to know it. The police-informers are not lacking in villages those days, you know. As the police got the information, the entire police force came and gheraoed the village .The police officer, with revolver in hand, made announcement in mike, intended for Gopia. As the police gheraoed him, all the ways for escape closed, he was asked to surrender.

Sisira paused at this point to take rest. Our heart beat had become faster; and we had become impatient and anxious. Asked, "Was Gopia caught?"

Sisir resumed the story; "At that time Gopia was dining with his friend. But soon got up and climbed the stair to reach the top of the roof, and looked around into the darkness. Below the police were alert with torch light, mike announcement still going on. Then Gopia jumped down from the two storied building; and ran hopping like a frog.

"But he did not break his legs or arms?" We asked.

"Don't you know, Gopia's shoes are fixed with spring? When he jumps on the ground his shoes would send him five feet up in the air. He would cover ten yards in one jump. He exploded such crackers that every where there was smoke. By the time the police could clean their eyes, Gopia had escaped. They ran aimlessly behind him; shot wildly in the darkness, into the sky, but Gopia was gone . No one could get an inkling of how he escaped".

We felt relieved; Gopia had finally escaped.

Although Gopia was a thief, many sensational tales used to be heard about him every day. The police would painstakingly search him and he would every time deceive them and escape. Some people told that he had acquired a blessing from goddess Chandi that no one would be able to nab him .However the tales of his giving notice prior to stealing and escapades in front of police were never ending.

Whenever a stranger was seen moving in our locality, we would presume him to be a member of Gopia's gang. The policemen in red turban and half - pants were occasionally seen those days in villages. Whenever we saw them,

we thought perhaps Gopia's gang has committed a theft in some neighboring village.

Gopia seemed to us wonderful and invisible. Getting to learn about his feats almost every day, we would respect him as a hero. When Bhakta reported a sensational news the other day, we all shuddered with fright.

Bhakta told, "Gopia has been enraged … furiously enraged".

We were startled, and looked terrified.

"Why? What happened?"

Bhakta continued, "Police have arrested Gopia's brother. Gopia is infuriated at this. He has sent a notice to the police officer that he would come to take away his brother. If needed, he would blow away the police station with a bomb".

None of us had seen where the police station was. Nor did we know which officer of which police station had arrested Gopia's brother. Still we could visualize a stout bearded man standing behind the bars, and a policeman patrolling in front of him.

We asked helplessly, "What will happen now?"

Our voice seemed too helpless as if the police station was somewhere nearby, and if it was bombarded, we would also be shattered.

Bhakta consoled us as if he knew Gopia intimately. Said, "Remember, Gopia never harms innocent people."

We heaved a sigh of relief as we considered ourselves innocent. Besides there are many tails about Gopia helping innocent people.

A long period ensued without any tale about Gopia . But we would always enquire about him from Bhakta who had reported about his plans of attending the police station. "Any information about him ? Did he attack the police station? Is his brother still at the police station? What do the police say about it? When would Gopia attack? Has he given a date? Has the date expired?" and so on. But Bhakta didn't have any answer to these questions.

However, Radhakant brought the latest news a few days later. "All that happened is not good at all."

"Why? What happened?"

"Gopia's brother is dead. The police have shot him dead."

We shuddered with fright and asked “What will happen now?”

Radhakant told, “What else will happen? Gopia will take revenge. He will not spare any policeman or any police station.”

We could visualize, with our eyes closed, that horrible sight in which Gopia, like Hanuman, was setting all the police station of Odisha on fire with his blazing tail.

Bhakta questioned like an inquisitive detective, “But how did it all happen?”

“You know, Gopia had sent a notice to the police station that he would come to take his brother away . The police were trembling since they got the notice. The officer thought it would be wise to go home on leave. The constable hid themselves. Then an order came from the higher authority to send Gopia’s brother to jail. The police were sending him to jail. Gopia somehow learnt the matter. When the police jeep was passing through the jungle, Gopia’s gang gheraoed it. Then firing started form both the sides. Taking opportunity, Gopia’s brother jumped off the jeep and started running away. The police shot him at his back; he died then and there. Infuriated Gopia burnt the police jeep, and killed the entire policemen there in the jungle. And went away leaving there a notice”.

“What is there in the notice?”

“What else would be there? He would henceforth take revenge. Firing, bombing looting the rich people; killing the police.”

Very much terrified, we looked this way and that. And kept looking at the house of Surya Sahoo, the only rich man in our locality. May be our invincible warrior Gopia will someday raid this house.

There was no news about Gopia for quite a few days following this incident. And we began chatting about the second type of heroes-the college students. Those days, college guys meant an appearance quite befitting a hero. Reckless and defiant talk; valiant like a goonda, and an impressing character. We had heard many sensational tales about how college guys board buses and trains without ticket and fallout with conductors and TTs. How they forcibly enter cinemas and theatres. There was no instance of serious thefts in our locality those days. Whatever thefts, those were very minor ones like stealing fish form someone’s ponds or a few bundles of paddy.

Suddenly, there was a major theft: all the cloths from Ganesh Panda’s store

were stolen. As the news spread in the village in the morning, people remained gaping at the open door of the store, and began gossiping among themselves. A few applied the techniques of detectives to elicit different facts about the theft.

Although we children were a bit frightened at the moment, we also tried to reach our own conclusions like adroit detectives. I asserted, surely this is Gopia's act. No one else can make such thefts.

Radhakant dissented "No, no! Gopia won't steal like this. He'd surely sent prior notice, a letter or at least write about it on walls."

I countered, "How can you trust a thief? May be Gopia has changed his ways. Why should he always steal in the same style. I've heard, he has many times stolen without any notice."

Radhakant said, "He surely leaves something written after the theft .He definitely writes something."

I disagreed, "May be he has gone away hastily, or hasn't got a piece of chalk to write. We carefully searched the walls of the cloth store to clear our suspicion, but no such trace was found anywhere. Only a couple of political and educative slogans could be detected."

I smiled at these and remarked, "Gopia mustn't have written this."

We children used to discuss in this manner but elderly people talked differently. They decided not to report in the police station, because they were sure that police would never be able to nab the thief, but would instead embarrass the villagers. Besides, the villagers were terribly afraid of police those days. It was therefore decided that the omniscient would be consulted to detect the thief.

A couple of uneventful days passed thereafter. The day after that the news was that the thief has been caught. The villagers had tied him to a tree. We rushed to the spot to have a look at the thief.

We had never seen a terrible thief before. We had quite strange ideas regarding a thief because he always came and disappeared in the darkness. Gopia was our hero and we thought he must be a very stout person capable of performing sensational heroic deeds.

As we reached the spot, we saw two sickly persons clad only in dirty towels tied to a tree, and pocketing the abuses of the villagers.

Radhakant ridiculed, "Are these the thieves?"

Bhakta said , “Ugh, but which one is Gopia ?”

I was becoming a victim of shattered dreams, and said, “Impossible, that can’t be. Gopia can never be like this?”

All that we could gather after an exhaustive investigation is like this: Ganesh Panda and some elderly persons had met an omniscient. He lived in a place ten miles away from our village. He made his calculation after asking the visitors questions like the name of a flower, fruit and a number. Then he calculated and informed that the thief will come again to that spot before the sunrise of the fifth day, from the day of theft.

The villagers came back and kept a vigil stealthily on the spot before the day break. These two young men as they moved by that way at that very time, were caught by the villagers and proved as the thieves.

These two people were protesting and pleading innocence saying that they were actually going to a distant market from very early morning. But their explanation didn’t seem veritable to the villagers , because they had undisputedly accepted the prediction of the omniscient to be true.

However the end of the episode was quite pathetic. Evening set in but these young men didn’t confess their guilt. The villagers tired of beating them eventually released them. The young men then lodged a complaint against the villagers in the nearby police station. The police came the next day and arrested Ganesh Panda and five others in the charge of atrocity on harijans.

Despite of all this, the villagers still believed that the omniscient was right; he could never do wrong. If they had kept the young men tied till next morning they would surely have confessed their guilt.

After a few days Ganesh Panda was released. People began to forget the episode. But I believed that Gopia surely had a hand behind the matter.

A number of sensational news about Gopia came to be heard every now and then, and it rendered the ordinary local events insignificant. It was once heard that Gopia was moving in the guise of a saint, long white beard and ashes smeared all over his body. Roaming in disguise in the day time Gopia decides where to steal. Someone even told that Gopia was making occult practices in the graveyard. Worshipping goddess Kali, he would make himself even more strong and magical. The police thereby could not even touch his shadow. He is in search of a child to offer sacrifices in his occult-worship to goddess Kali.

This news was enough to terrify us. We began to look with suspicion at all the bearded people looking like saints moving in the locality. We were afraid of them too.

Once, my elder brother had put his shirt on the compound wall of the school when he went to play with his friends. It couldn't be known when someone had stolen the shirt. When he didn't find his shirt at the end of the play, he returned home weeping and suffered even scolds and beating from Mama.

Mama asked, "Tell how that boy stole the shirt?"

I countered, "How do you know that it was a child?"

Mama asserted, "Why should a man steal it ?"

I argued, "Gopia is a man, after all; does not he steal?"

Elder brother questioned me, "Do you suspect that Gopia has stolen my shirt?"

I asserted, "What is impossible in it? Gopia is moving through bad times these days. His gang is shattered. Police have captured his fort. He is moving surreptitiously all by himself."

Elder brother disagreed, "Quite impossible! Gopia will never come down to such a standard. He is a big thief. Really a very big thief."

Mama got infuriated when she realized that our argument was going wild and told, "That boy will definitely be caught. He has stolen such a nice shirt. It looked so beautiful on my boy."

I also became sad at Mama's self-pity. There was a rule in our home that the dresses that became short for elder brother would be mine. And the dress that became short for me passed on to my younger brother. Thus, that nice shirt was sure to have been mine someday, but it was stolen. It was a great loss. I really felt sorry, for it.

Elder brother fumed that he would surely go to the omniscient, though he was never able to do that as none of us had had his address. After a year, however, a boy came to our school wearing that stolen shirt. Elder brother made no mistake in recognizing his shirt; and dragged the boy to our home.

Mama asked the boy, "Have you bought the shirt?"

"No, we haven't bought it?" The boy replied. "My father had…"

"From where?"

"I don't know that."

The boy was in tears as he told his last words. Papa arrived just at the moment, and tried to placate us. He seemed to be undermining our feeling of

joy and thrill in nabbing a thief. Said, “Can you really accept the shirt if ever the boy returned it?”

We said, “Certainly not but…….”

“Let him go. He is a very poor boy. He used to come to school last year and didn’t come for many days after that. Do you know why? Because he didn’t have a shirt. Forgive him and let him go.”

As if a stream of energy flowed from Papa’s lips. We silently accepted his advice. But elder brother seemed a bit dissatisfied, because he was expecting a reward as he had caught the thief. However I asked the boy my last important question before he left “Is your father’s name Gopia?”

He couldn’t understand my question or he was so terrified that he only looked at me in consternation. Finally told, “ I don’t know. We only call him ‘Papa”.

I told myself that Gopia would never steal such trifle things.

A few days later a newspaper reported that a terrible thief named Gopia had died from TB in Puri Jail.

But none of us believed the news. Because Gopia was a man of exceptional power; he could never die of a disease, and so helplessly. He would be some other Gopia Naik. Gopia should never be caught.

Childhood heroes are never defeated. Nor do they ever die. ■

POEMS

Your Village

Sitakant Mahapatra

The expanding afternoon
has finally sizzled and softened:
the steep pass undoes the buttons
of its shirt
and shows its lonely, distant traveler:
the bloody horizon,
the string of hills holding hands
around your village,
playing *puchi,* the jumping game
of girls.

The sun descends hastily
on the smooth steps of your cheeks.
Two hills, like pincers,
clasp the glowing chunk of fire
and drop it into the blue vacancy
of the moist wind.

My despair makes friends
With dark *sal* trees.

On the clay walls in your village
painted elephants dance
and flowers bloom
on the tall trunks of the *sal;*
there is a hive and, searching
for honey, a young tribesman
leaps into the blue
darkness to the wet star
and the trampled petals.

No one returns
form that scented navel.

Star light breaks the pot of silence.
Holding their hands,
stamping in their heart-felt
disappointments, dancers,
rainbows within fists,
light in the eyes of shadow-pictures
and an unknown grief in the face.

Next morning,
we return
while your village still sleeps,
cradling its head between the hills,
like baby Krishna
between the two enormous breasts
of *Putana*.
■

Scene, Change of Scenes

Phani Mohanty

A dull wind blows.
At the end of the village
In the funeral ground
On the crowded branches
of the banyan tree
A witch sits,
And smoothens her loose hair
happily.
The road is not crowded
with traffic
The highway is open
And quiet like the open sky,
The half-naked *bustee* boys play
with stick,
Their indecent whistles and shouts
Fill the whole area with noise.

The customers are few
There is no startling event anywhere
The wind blows and blows
The tired wind continuously blows.
In the empty tunnel-like road
In the indifferent wind
This burnt-out body sickens.
In the broken surface
of the damaged compound wall
A stray birdie shreiks
from time to time,
And the wind goes on blowing
continuously.
In the spine-chilling cold wind
The branches of trees move
perilously
And the wind blows
Without whatsoever any control.
The torn and stitched flag
Flutters at the top of the village
temple,
And the wind blows, blows, blows.
The sand-bank relationship
between we two
Gets shaken by the continuous wind
And lies broken on earth,
And the careless wind continues
to blow.
The scenes and the scenes that
change
All look graceless and pale.
Your pale, graceless face appears
to me
Known and not known.
And no respite to the wind
It goes on blowing.
■

The Artist

Original in Bengali : Sankho Ghosh
Translation : Gopal Roy

Light fall upon the face of night
half passed
Other half remain silent within self
You are confused even today,
Do not know yet
Where stars die or where they live.

Sometime you walk
As mere a dwarf,
All the body covered with words
Getting the spring awake
beside the bed
Sometime your ghost stands
Larger than you.

Sound and colour create
a pure breath,
A portion evapourate,
other remains left.
Do you know yourself ?
How much do know?
You are the same
what media make you.
■

Thought of Reaching a Stoppage

Gopal Roy

Occasionally rises the whirlwind
of cheap involvement,
It seems good to come to a stop.
Chased by terror from dream- age
and
Before getting crushed
under the weariness
Of reaching fifty,
It is good to come to a stop.

It is good to stop occasionally
to renew the feeling about the girl
named Love,
Who once was lost at the turning.
Fifty becomes eighteen
if she touches.
It is good to stop occasionally
To know the eternal boy
within.

In or out of time
it is good to get burnt
Like a shaded leaf
enchanted by the fire
Within its own.
That too, is reaching a stoppage.
■

Cursed whole Night

Ranjan Kumar Das

Only the dung bells of prison
Was giving the message
of the depth of night.

I noted
The prisoners were sleepless
So were the warders .

With tear-torn eyes
I was also sleepless
with my dying dreams
waiting for the distressing night
to break.

The warder was awake
apprehending any mishap in night
The prisoner was awake
anticipating a hopeful morning
I was awake with my desperations !

Might be
Tomorrow the warder will be free
from duty.
The prisoner will be set free
some or other day.
But I have to stay sleepless
for ever and ever
with my endless trials
and tribulations.
■

An Ode to Friendship

Namita Rout

Friendship!
You are like the pattering raindrops,
noisy, disturbing, and trying
to put a hold on my learning ways.
But I think you are attentive always
and ever eager
to paint my heart with colour.
With the colours of a colourful
flower.
You are a beacon of flame –
radiant and bright
that lends me the courage to fight;
you tell me that you are the
expansive sky,
but that only gives me the
confidence to try.
You have taught me how to share,
And to search for a sad soul
in need of a friend with care.
You are the most beautiful word
mankind has sought and discovered.
It is your greatness
that you are there
any time anywhere
whenever a heart is hurt
at life's confused crossroad.
You vow that you are steely
and cannot be broken.
You promise that you will stand by
each one
who is witnessing trouble
and is on the verge of desolation.
And to those devastated ones
you offer yourself
as the Divine Companion. ■

My House and Me

Kiran Bastia

I have often thought –
if my house becomes the sky
someday,
I will be a star there;
And if a garden,
I will be its flower.
If my house becomes a tree,
I will turn a sweet
and succulent fruit
to hang from its boughs;
And if a library,
I will multiply into a thousand
and fill up its cabinets.
And finally,
if my house will turn a school
someday,
I surely will be
its most disciplined pupil. ■

Quest

Original in Bengali : Saumen Shaw
Translation : Gopal Roy

I come aside -
near the window,
Remain silent and think -
You are so late in writing two lines?
Shading chrysanthemum
winter is going away
with all its companion.

The junglehome burdened with
day's tiredness
Has slept.

Let him sleep, don't call upon,
because -
Before getting him awakened
We need a true human being
And not a poet who has written
five thousand lines.
■

Guest House

Srikanta Mishra

Life is a guest house
from beginning to end.
Always crowded
with tourist friends,
continue to come and go,
till the span end.

Just like, in a guest house,
guests come and go.
Down the memory lane, stories -
pleasant and pathetic, flow.
Starting with the touch of parents
many a relation as the child grows.
Some are close, some are distant
sooner or later, they also have to go.

The growing age,
the changing vision
like physical, mental and so on.
Likes, dislikes, favours and reverse
usually moves on.
Every new beginning
itself a fun
hopefully to all known.

Feelings and taste, likes and dislikes
keeps on changing colours
a chameleon alike,
Those which topped the list
of the sweet likings
may find top places
among severe dislikes.

All these happenings
happen in me
as you know
as guests to a guest-house
come and go.
Feelings, emotions, relations
and changes woe
like wise occur, shall keep on doing
to and fro.

Rise and fall, pleasure and pathos
inevitable in every life,
a cobweb
non could spare.
Me mine, they thine,
everyone a pray there
with full knowledge, all are bound,
could anyone be spared.

If I welcome or refuse
do they ever care,
they used to come in rotation,
indifferent to my desire.
I do welcome them and provide
whatever they require,
they are my guests, I am to serve,
for that the guest-houses are.

With success I go mad,
endowed with prejudiced pride,
welcome the vices for a luxurious stay,
they take a ride

Id desires prevails upon to play,
ego gets chances too wide,
super-ego though left alone fights
these camouflaged guests indeed.

Difficult to administrate with
these vicious guests
have to appoint an able manager
to tackle the best.
So long the guest-house is open,
the show must go on.
Many types of guests shall visit,
but the house must know to reason.

I am a guest-house,
at times I also host
strangers/visitors who come
even with their identity lost.
Transitory in nature is the power
super-most.
Their stay pollutes,
gives me experience
the worst.

When it's time for me
to be abandoned
being dilapidated,
I still host few guests like old age
and disease spread
All through my body,
I am interested no more
But I know the show must go on,
I serve till the end.
■

The Footsteps that You Hear

Ashoke Tanti

Only you can hear
the footsteps of Buddha.
Sleeping wife and child -
Love embraces his limbs,
As the foot falls
on the silent streets,
Reverberates
A close watch by the mute stars.
And moisture from his own nostrils.
Cold,
As the cold wind flows between us
From the pranks
And occasional craters of rivalry
The river does not move a bit
Holding the moonlit water
in its dam;
Only you sitting still on your mat
Listening each footstep of Love
That grows as it comes far
And the night lovingly holds
Stressed wife by the side of
mechanical husband
Girl-child dreaming
About the non - muggle comfort
of mother's womb.
Barking of dog in shivering tickles
of clock.
The death dies for you
As the footstep envisage
the sacrifice.
■

Similipal*

Muktilata Aich

Oh! Similipal -
The Queen of Nature,
You are my loving dear.
The water bubbles
Of your water falls -
Joranda, Barehipani and *Uski*
Resembles like seven colours
of Rainbow.
Blue sky, Fragrance of
dazzling flowers
Makes the whole valley's veil.
In winter your beauty grows,
You spread snowy hands
On the Earth.
The monotonous mountains -
the myth of the moments,
The murmuring sounds
Of the tall pine trees
Make your whole body full of rhymes.
How beautiful the spectacles
When thousands of Eucalyptus
Shook their heads in gentle breeze.
Thousands of visitors
from all over
come to enjoy your lovable beauty.
Really I am proud
As you have embraced me.
since long years.
■

* situated in Mayurbhanja district of Odisha, India. A national park, tiger sanctuary, a touristy place.

Today.....

Yashna Panda

Today I live
As if the world will end tomorrow.
Today I love
All the nouns in the world.
Today I smile
For I have made someone smile
Today.

Today I cry
Because I can
Today I hate
The onlookers not standing up
Today I kill
A person's self-esteem
Today.

Today I think
Inside and outside of my brain
Today I say
Sorry, it won't happen again.
Today I dream
Of Venus dropping red everywhere
Just Today
Now is it..... the life.
So live it!.....
■

Dandisalt

Pitambar Tarai

Nowadays, who cares to ask
a question —
Which has become
a heap of garbage under a tree,
A national question involving an
ancient injury,
Does anyone remember that
anymore,
You may well say.
Though the manure has nourished
the tree,
But, pray, who cares for that —
Yet for the fruits dangling
from its boughs
All the conspiracies
and counter moves,
Hi-tech slogans, defections
and affectations,
So many victories and losses,
and hypocrisies;
Nothing succeeds like success —
failures too,
Seeks shelter in a dalit membership
or a card,
Or a model
for a famous artist's portrait,
Sells for staggering dollars,
and in case it fails,
Becomes a Yesman,
most loyal servant,
for who will not buy brand,
unadulterated flattery!
On each tri-coloured leaf
of that tree hang
Autobiographies of lathi charges
and incarcerations,
But they go unnoticed,
for who cares to see,
As the butterfly never looks back
once,
or never wishes to cuddle
the old caterpillar's chest.
Nowadays these things have become
commonplace,
Why don't you even try
to understand!
Standing on the edge
of the departing age,
You may well have been oblivious,
That all the fathers, now or before,
are alike
Middle aged, they pine for
what is gone,
Not forward.
Desirous of reaping a good harvest
At the end of a laborious year,
fathers dream;
The wiser sons though,
greater on their own scales,
Don't you see — whether
in lovemaking or eloping,
A globalized world is too small
for their embrace!
Now you say — why will anyone
ask,
About the history or mystery
of the Dandisalt,
Whosoever may be
on the interview board,
Who will have remembered the salt
like that manure,
Linked with the stained appearance
of a slave country
Struggling relentlessly for the

coveted freedom,
Has metamorphosed,
and now there stands
An independent country,
called nation.
In that country
so many questions are asked,
Only for the sake of questioning,
I know;
Like every other time as before,
it's crystal clear
What they will ask me this time too;
Now in tinsel and sparkling
polypacks,
Whiter appear the salts
of renowned companies,
Now hardly anyone will ask
'What is Dandisalt?',
So don't you worry —
have patience.
Umpteenth times you may have
stretched your hands
Pointing where once you were
manufacturing salt,
How the beaming noon
used to spread its smile across
The comforting, dry fields
of hundreds of acres
The salt-flowers sprinkled
and piled slowly and steadily,
And how mother was getting
wonderstruck every minute
And picked up the fast handful
to offer first to the deity,
Here trickled down your salty sweat,
the water of the Luna,
Your ability blossoming
as the salt-flowers, I know,
Even after understanding,
I fail to understand as I am slow.
But why would anyone ask —
'What do you mean by Dandisalt?'
Don't you worry,
Have patience, I must say. ■

A Healthy Purpose

Sugam Yadav

Tell me someone:
What happens in the world?
Why fear the animals from man?
Why he has a dreadly cane.
He has become a ghastly danger,
As he ever keeps the motion of anger.
Which is precious : nature or man?
The nature remains calm
while proud is the man.
No man says that
the nature is our pride,
As he games to make it
a thing of shroud.
And puts dirty dots
on the clean ground.
This dirty thing is happening all around.
When a person tells many lies,
He will be a liar in All's eyes.
Don't tell a lie for any trivial purpose,
But speak the Ttruth,
Only the Truth,
For a heathy purpose.
■

Book Review

Sukama and OtherPoems.

by Nandini Sahu, kavinandini@rediffmail.com

Publisher : The Poetry Society of India, Gurgaon (Hariyana), India.

Reviewer : Gagan B. Purohit, gaganbiharipurohitbf123@gmail.com

NandiniSahu's new poetry collection *Sukama and Other Poems*(2013) is her latest contribution to Indian literature written in English. Perhaps she wrote this volume with a view to reconsider our established and biased opinion on the poor and marginalized on the onehand and women in general on the other. *Sukuma and Other Poems* consists of 48 exquisitely crafted poems to suit to the purposes of representing the case of the subaltern. The inspiration for the volume seems to stem from the poet's visit to her native place in 2010 when she heard the sad demise of Sukama, her childhood domestic help. Nandini Sahu, the woman-inclined and thought provoking poet, steeped in feminist criticism is seen to represent the case of women, especially the marginalized and down trodden .

The title poem "Sukama" delves deep into Sahu's past to reconstruct the social milieu prevalent during her childhood in the true spirit of a woman concerned with a hierarchical system that had taken woman for granted. The tribal *Kandh* woman has been treated as a surrogate or "foster mother" who has been presented with a kind of supportive solidarity that only poet of Nandini Sahu's stature can explore. That she was a pretty and attractive woman during her youth, and her tattooed face (her mother's protective steps in order to make her less attractive and less desirable) speaks volumes about the plight of a marginalized, tribal woman. The idyllic atmosphere has been replaced by the city bred hybridity and with it the promise and innocence of Sukama also disappear. The poet urges her readers to support the cause of this "slum-dog tale" of the poor and helpless woman.

The next poem, "Bridge-in-Making" explores Sahu's search for roots to retain her original flavor in a globalised context where she tries to strike out a middle course between the "privileged" and "marginalized". She rivets her attention on the indigenous flavor by willing to write "poetry as delicious as watered-rice, brinjalfry and dry fish". She clings to her roots firmly for her very survival in the poetic world. She also candidly admits her allegiance to English without refurbishing or tarnishing image of her ancestry. She writes :

> Odia is to think, feel, dream and be my funeral pyre.
> English, to me, is my garland and my sword, my sole refuge .(5)

She has also shed the fear of colour complex and is not afraid of writing about her "wheatish brown skin". Subaltern studies which had been out-rightly

rejected as "lock, stock, barrel" has lost its hegemonic implications in recent days where women have seized opportunities to occupy significant positions. Colourcomplex is no more treated as potential force. Nelson Mandela's funeral ceremony being attended by over ninety heads of the countries points to this triumph of colour complex.

Elsewhere she has established herself (as all poets!) as the "unacknowledged legislator of the world". Sahu is not scared to wage a lone battle against the loneliness, boredom and "nothingness of life" which haunt her soul routinely. She dares "the endless agony of a nude lifetime".

To change the serious mood of struggle for survival, Sahu refreshes our mind by drawing our attention to the true love where all divergent elements vie for a symbiotic harmony. She urges her lover to forget the earthly worries and misunderstandings, and indulge in true love. She says

> I am the sea, and you the vessel .
> Is life only a game of the victor andthe vanquished?
> (The Lamb-Wool Sky ,13)

She showcases "the trajectory to living" through the rich store house of images and metaphors that sing the praise of making life beautiful and worth living. But living in a metro where relationships break in seconds, Sahu is appalled with the spurious developments where she has lost her "punch word" to describe her agony. She possesses a strong wish to become "an autonomous woman / sometimes / I am my own mother" (Chasing The Mirage, 19). She is caught "between myself and myself", her real self and a make-shift one that she has adapted for her self, and the ambivalencecomes to the fore in many a poems.

That she is bred and brought up as an Odia does not undermine her poetic credentials and her worldwide acclaim as poet is without doubt. "Odishan Landscape" becomes her forte. She showers praise for her native land: "Odisha, the melting pot of cultures / the melting point of the East and West" (31). Sahu profusely alludes to the historical roots where *Chandasoka* metamorphosed into *Dharmasoka*and the Places like Puri, Konark, Gopalpur-on-sea may remind the poet of her childhood; but her cosmopolitan placement in Delhi washes away the tag of local colour to replace it with universal acceptance. Sahu tries hard and succeeds to preserve her multicultural identity .

Whether in "Sukama" or in "The Song of The Kandha Woman" or in the "Odishan Landscapes", she seems to represent the cause of the "New Subaltern" that would make Gayatri Spivak Chakravarthy proud. Spivak's "Can The Subaltern Speak" finds its vindication in Sahu's poems and the glimpses of this vindication can be traced in Odia *Laxmi Purana* in which the subaltern Shreya (the low caste Shreya Chandaluni) has been properly represented by

none other than Godess Laxmi. She has been deserted by Jagannatha at the behest of his elder brother Balabhadra to prohibit her entrance to the Great Temple (Bada Deula). Things so happened that both the brothers went foodless for days together finally to yield to the wishes of the defiled Goddess of wealth. They accepted food from her hand and made amends for the injustice meted out to her by allowing food from Anand Bazar open to all people irrespective of their caste.

There is a lovely poem, *"Shoes*" which talks of patriarchy and androgyny.While talking of the various men in the personae's life—grandfather ,father, husband and son— "shoes" are used as a metaphor for male-dominance. The memory of the shoes haunts her even when she has left those in a remote past:

> Now I keep myself busy
> sipping cinnamon and herbal tea eating almonds,
> listening to music reading novels and
> writing things of my interest.
> I have heard the edge of the shoes had
> vanished decades ago
> when I first began writing poems in
> English flawless.
> (But)Does memory spare you?
> …Do androgyny and patriarchy give you the space
> to think otherwise ? (Shoes, 55)

Another poem*, "Growing Up Amid the Ruins and the Rains",* is a nostalgic recollection of her childhood in Udayagiri, a rural village in Odisha, where the past and the present are merged in a most artistic way, revealing the pain in her present state:

> Growing up among the ruins, patiently,
> I have become mature in the art of frolicking
> with my shadow till sundown. Each
> dark night, it creeps under my door,
> that feel of love and the sense of loss borrowed
> fromUdayagiri. …
> In darkness I touch and feel the ruins.
> Ruined pillars, archways, moth-destroyed wedding albums.
> Sultry, sticky cream-powder-comb boxes.Detached parents and
> sisters.
>
> (*Growing Up Amid the Ruins and the Rains,* 88)

We readers are extremely thankful to the poet for presenting a panoramic canvas where the subaltern's case is being adequately represented.

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