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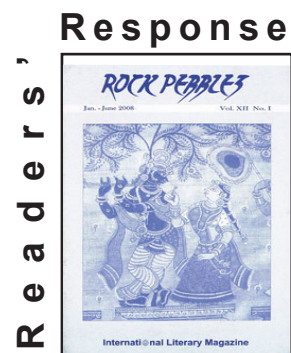
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Readers' Response (Contd. from p. 06)

..... I offer my words of encomium to you as one of the worthiest brains of Orissa as you have brought out a noble mission to bind many of the intellectuals not only of India but also of the world with the tether of love and have given them luminous recognition through your precious magazine. I can't find appropriate words and lack the suitable emotion to describe your uncommon and unparalleled contribution to the society. Only those graced and anointed by God can adopt such an uphill task.

Being enchanted by the most appealing topics in your "Rock Pebbles", I found a propensity to write..... Wishing you God's benison for your unflinching and indomitable advance with your noble mission.

*Lingaraj Nayak
Kuamara, Mayurbhanj, Orissa.*



..... It is an excellent issue with a good number of articles of very high standard which may be useful to all who love literature. The cover is beautiful & captivating. It is also a pleasure to see the growing number of pages and life subscribers.....

*Bipin Patsani,
Arunachal Pradesh*

.....The issue is replete with essays which take lions' share of contents this time. All the articles are well written, and on latest topics. As for the poems, I reckon they are equally good pieces. Rock Pebbles is growing in the quality of contents from issue to issue....

*P.V. Laxmiprasad,
Andhra Pradesh*

.....I have the privilege to have a glance and to peep through your lively Rock Pebbles, say "SALAGRAM". I convey my regards to it and to its worthy editor at the very outset. Infact, it is a very praise-worthy step to publish such an intellectual piece on English literature after 'Mirror'. I wish longevity of Rock Pebbles in the present up-down tracks.....

*Prasanta Mohapatra,
Mayurbhanja, Orissa.*

.....All the articles included in the magazine are upto mark. I liked all the research articles which will help me in future if I pursue my research work. The magazine maintains a remarkable standard.

*Namita Nayak,
Jagatsinghpur, Orissa.*

.....I am very proud to say that running a literary magazine, that too in English is not a joke. People like you, who have indomitable courage and commitment, can only succeed in their tasks. I have seen a copy of the magazine very recently and I have gone through it and found it quite useful to my college teachers and students. Writers from remote area will be made known to the modern readership through Rock Pebbles.

*Dr. S.S. Biradar,
Bijapur, Karnataka.*

.....I am glad to have your great issue of Rock Pebbles (Jan.-June' 08). Very wonderful work from all round the world. Your hard-work had made and mould to the mount of great faith carrying and caring for the established and upcoming poets, poetry - lovers and literary giants to have their inspiration and impressions. God bless you a long life for your literary itinerary.

*Er. N. Karthikeyan Osho
Chennai, Tamilnadu.*

I have a gut response to the Jan. - June'08 issue of Rock Pebbles. Bipin Patsani's "Grandfather" is reminiscent of my own. "The Absurd in The Outsider" is very valuable to the students of English literature. May the journal grow from strength to strength to fulfill the intellectual and literary aspirations of the public.

*Pramod Kumar Rath
Polasara, Ganjam, Orissa*

Your swincere effort in promoting Indian writing in English is admirable. Every issue of Rock pebbles unfolds new Indian merits. May God grant you courage and comfort to sun the journal more successfully.

*M.K. Anil Kumar,
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala*

(Contd. to p.03, Col. II)

Travel as Pilgrimage : Bimal Dey's The Last Time I Saw Tibet and Lama Govinda's The Way of the White Clouds

* Dr. V.P. Singh

A significant purpose of travel is pilgrimage. The pilgrim travels long distances and sojourns in the holy lands of his faith to derive spiritual fulfillment, to understand one's self and to attain peace. What makes this kind of quest interesting is that the traveller does not necessarily travel to the lands of his own faith but is curious to learn about faiths other than his own. In this sense the traveller has the same curiosity that the pilgrim has for a shrine of his own faith even if he lacks the devotion and reverence attached to the traditional pilgrimage. When the traveller in question is a writer he tries to make sense of the other culture in religious and spiritual terms and writes about it to express his ideas and views on it and to interpret that culture for the world at large. This quest into the other faith and the need to foreground it is what leads men and women to travel to pilgrimages which in turn draws out varied perceptions and insights in their writings.

One such celebrated pilgrim site is Tibet, celebrated the world over for its mystic allure, enlightened masters, Tantric practices and surreal landscape. Most of the travelogues on Tibet are quests for learning the unique wisdom and the supernatural practices of Tibetan Buddhism. While Tibet's secluded and unusual terrain and traditional customs have their own unique appeal, it is the religious and spiritual life that forms the mainstay of Tibetan life. It is natural then for travellers - particularly Western travellers coming from a markedly different culture - to approach Tibet in the spirit of the spiritual seeker. It is no surprise then Tibetan travelogues are primarily spiritual in nature. Narratives of journey and sojourn to Tibet are thus pilgrimages rather than mere adventurous forays into an esoteric location.

While Western accounts of Tibet such as Alexandra David Neel's Magic and Mystery in Tibet and My Journey to Lhasa as

well as Heinrich Harrer's **Seven Years in Tibet** are well known and celebrated, few readers are familiar with Indian accounts of Tibet. One of the early Indian accounts of a long journey to Tibet and Kailash Mansarovar is Bimal Dey's Bangla travelogue **Mahatirther Shesh Jatri** published in 1982 and translated as **The last time I saw Tibet** by Malobika Chaudhuri and published in 2007. Similarly there is Lama Anagrika Govinda's **The Way of the White Clouds** published in 1966. Both these books are travelogues of the spirit as much as they are narratives of journey and sojourn in space and time. In other words they are as much spiritual travelogues as they are physical travelogues. They narrate a quest for the *guru* as well as for the pilgrimage. Lama Govinda defines a pilgrimage in his preface:

..... a pilgrimage distinguishes itself from an ordinary journey by the fact that it does not follow a laid-out plan or itinerary, that it does not pursue a fixed aim or a limited purpose, but that it carries its meaning in itself, by relying on an inner urge which operates on two planes: on the physical as well as on the spiritual plane. It is a movement not only in the outer, but equally in the inner space, a movement whose spontaneity is that of the nature of all life, i.e. of all that grows continually beyond its momentary form, a movement that always starts from an invisible inner core. (Lama Govinda Preface xiii)

In a recent book on Tibet, **Last Seen in Lhasa, The story of an extraordinary friendship in Lhasa**, Claire Scobie writes of her wonder at the Tibetan devotion to pilgrimage. The idea of pilgrimage is "less to reach a particular destination than to transcend, through inspired travel, the attachments and habits of inattention that restrict awareness of a larger reality" (Dunham et al qtd. in Claire Scobie). When Claire Scobie interviews the Dalai Lama about the value of pilgrimage, he treats the idea with levity pointing out through an anecdote that pilgrimages reside in one's own heart.

Bimal Dey narrates in **The last time I saw Tibet** how he embarks on a journey to Tibet and Kailash Mansarovar as a young sixteen year old. He leaves his home in Ichhapur and goes to

The monk abruptly leaves him but Bimal, the young boy who has become his disciple at heart, goes in search of him to Gangtok. He lives in a bazaar and searches for his *guru* and by a strange quirk of destiny finds him. The boy is overjoyed to find his *Guru* but the monk is not at all surprised to see him. Together they make their way to Echey Gumphu¹ where arrangements are made for him to stay with the monk. As the boy discovers, his revered *Guru* is a Buddhist *bhikshu* whose ancestral home lay somewhere in Sikkim. The monk's entourage of Lamas is about to embark on a journey through Tibet to Kailash Mansarovar. Bimal desperately wants to go with the monk who agrees to take him along but not until he has been initiated. He is made to sit in meditation for three days to test his resolve and power of endurance at the end of which the monk accepts him as a disciple and allows him to prepare for his journey to Tibet. He is initiated into the Buddhist fold and before setting out on the arduous journey a vow of silence is enjoined upon him so that he does not - as an Indian - arouse the suspicion of Chinese soldiers who have occupied Tibet. This seems a small price to pay for a journey that Bimal Dey has cherished in his heart. On the long route to Kailash the group of Lamas are offered Tibetan hospitality at its best because to serve food and offer shelter to tired Lamas is traditionally considered an act of merit. Throughout their journey the most awed reverence is shown to the monks which makes their perilous journey more bearable. As at several places the group of Lamas have to face questioning by Chinese soldiers at Gyatse, Tibet's third largest city after Lhasa and Shigatse. It is here that young Bimal meets Lama Therapa who tells him there is a great similarity between Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism with *Tara* the female Bodhisatva being a reincarnation of goddess *Kali* and *Prajnaparamita* being the Buddhist form of *Saraswati*, the goddess of knowledge. Similarly *Shiva* and *Manjushree* and *Indra* and *Vajrapani* are the same deities worshipped by different names.

The devotion to his *Guru* and the sincerity of his resolve to pursue his journey are rare traits in a boy as young as the sixteen year old Bimal. What makes the account of his journey so engaging is the freshness of his perception and the sincerity of his

The joy of having discovered a *guru*, of initiation on the spiritual path and the devotion to the *guru* are the underlying emotions of Lama Govinda's **The Way of The White Clouds**. Lama Govinda describes his joy at having found his *Guru*, Tomo Geshe an enlightened Buddhist master. *"What greater opportunity could fate offer me than meeting such a man and coming into living contact with the spirit that had moved the Buddhas and saints of the past and would inspire those of the future!"* (32) On being accepted as a disciple, Lama Govinda writes, *"The inner bond which was created on the day on which I received the abhiseka, my first and therefore most important initiation, became a constant source of strength and inspiration."* (38)

Bimal Dey's travelogue culminates not in Lhasa but in Kailash Mansarovar, but Lhasa as the capital of Tibet is a significant landmark in his journey. He begins his sojourn at Lhasa with a visit to the Jokhang temple which houses the Buddha statue brought by King Song-San Gampo's Chinese consort to Tibet. It was the Queen of Song-San Gampo who brought Buddhism to Tibet which was until then a land of animistic faith. Dey notes the unique synthesis of Hinduism with Buddhism in the temple where he finds statues of Indian deities like *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Shiva*, *Gouri* and *Saraswati*. The *Shiva* mascot of the serpent and the lion of *Durga* were reinvented in the Jokhang temple as the dragon. Bimal Dey gives the reader a detailed history of the Potala. In the fifteenth century it was the fifth Dalai Lama renowned for his intelligence and administrative abilities who built the Potala Palace as it appears today. When the second storey was almost complete the Dalai Lama fell seriously ill. His illness and subsequent death was kept a closely guarded secret so that work on the Potala palace remained unaffected. The construction of the palace continued for the next thirteen years and it stands today as one of the most magnificent structures in the whole wide world. The palace housed several gold statues but there were, back in 1956, no guards to protect the treasures. This was evidence of the integrity of the Tibetan people. Much in the manner of Heinrich Harrer in **Seven Years in**

It was the custom in Tibet that when the Dalai Lama passed by, everyone should stand back with palms joined together, in readiness to greet him with due respect. Before us a procession of ten people began to move forward. There could be no question of failing to recognize the Dalai Lama. A pair of immensely tall and hefty guards preceded him. Bringing up the rear were eight people. At the centre of them all was the young Dalai Lama in bright

The account of Bimal Dey's pilgrimage to Kailash Man-sarovar is far more daunting than his collective pilgrimage in the company of other monks to Lhasa in that it is a solitary journey and an extremely arduous one. He is alone without the support of his companions or the guidance of his *guru* and the terrain is harsh with the cold of Tibet so difficult to bear that there are times when the author feels he cannot go on. This journey is a remarkable testimony of the pilgrim's spirit of perseverance. As the account of a solitary individual facing the adversities of hunger, cold and exhaustion it must rank as a classic example of the endurance that man is capable of. He describes the perils of his situation:

When I had been part of a group, I had encountered no problems whatsoever. Guruji, my guide and mentor, had been there to take care of everything. My current situation presented a stark contrast..... I walked on completely dependent on the almighty. (209)

Yet despite the physical challenges Bimal Dey perseveres in the spirit of the ardent pilgrim. He realizes even as he surmounts the physical hardships of his journey that his spirit transcends the limitations of the body. What impelled him was the burning zeal to reach Kailash no matter what the odds. He perceives his journey as a metaphor for the journey of life:

While walking along, I would experience the feeling that my body and my soul were two separate entities. In reality we were all travellers on a journey that led us from our worldly lives defined by narrow, finite boundaries towards the eternal and the infinite, much in the same manner in which my spirit drove me along my present path in its quest to pay homage at Kailashnath. (209)

Despite severely adverse circumstances of climate and terrain, Lama Govinda never feels defeated or restricted. On the contrary there is a sense of fullness and freedom from the constraints of a routine existence. It is interesting to see how Tibet with its harsh and extreme natural conditions evokes the same response in Lama Govinda as it does in Bimal Dey. While Bimal Dey experiences a disconnect between body and mind, Lama Govinda describes himself as having "the spontaneous certainty of being neither bound by space or time, the ability to experience the fullness of both without clinging to any of their aspects,....." (60) Yet both transcend physical limitations and feel an elevation of the power of the spirit. While Bimal Dey describes his pursuit towards "the eternal and the infinite" (209), Lama Govinda describes "a sense of greater freedom and independence"(60):

In spite of the feeling of smallness in the vastness and grandeur of the mountain landscape, in spite of the knowledge of human limitations and dependence on the whims of wind and weather..... I had never felt a sense of greater freedom and independence. I realized more than ever how narrow and circumscribed our so-called civilized life is, how much we pay for the security of a sheltered life by way of freedom and real independence of thought and action. (60)

Despite the steadfastness of his resolve to pursue his journey there is a time of extreme physical hardship due to the bitter cold when Bimal Dey questions the purpose of his pilgrimage. If the purpose of the pilgrimage was to gain merit through good *Karma* he thought it was futile:

What purpose would be served by accumulating good deeds? Perhaps the life of the ascetic I had chosen, the donning of this special garb, stockpiling of good deeds, the afterlife and nirvana were a mere fallacy, nothing more than a lie, Everything boiled down to a quest for survival.(226)

What is remarkable is that despite these momentary misgivings, Bimal Dey resolutely pursues his goal of reaching

Kailash by carrying on his journey. The awe-inspiring beauty of Himalayan landscape is again described in words of speechless wonder when he actually witnesses Mansarovar:

Then came the auspicious moment. As soon as we rounded a small hill, heaven lay before us. It was, indeed, heaven, and we stood there motionless, our senses sharply attuned to what lay before us, drinking in the ethereal vision of its glory. Not a word was uttered, as all sensation and experience associated with the everyday world remained suspended. Here, nature transcended the dictates of the rational mind and paved the way for a true communion with

Lama Govinda describes the deeper symbolic significance of Kailash which forms, “the hub of the two most important ancient civilizations of the world” namely India and China. Kailash is not just the centre of the universe but also the “metaphysical centre of the world”. It is a universal axis just as the spinal cord within the body and “just as the various centres of consciousness are supported by and connected to the spinal cord” (Govinda 198), Kailash is the fountainhead of all the major rivers of the sub-continent namely the Brahmaputra, the Indus and the Sutlej. Kailash is a cosmic macrocosm of the physiological microcosm of the spinal cord.

The final section of **The Last Time I saw Tibet** is an account of Bimal Dey's final journey and sojourn through Tibet. Much to his surprise the Tibet he returns to is drastically changed. The incipient phase of Chinese influence in 1956 is so deeply entrenched that there are more Han in Lhasa than Tibetans. The process of modernization and cultural hegemony is so evident everywhere that it is difficult to connect the Lhasa of 1956 with this contemporary, bustling city. He wonders where he had landed and where the Lhasa of his dreams was. He feels that his dreams have shattered. It is only when he notices Jokhang which remains relatively unchanged that he warms up to the old essence of Lhasa. Srongsheeshi, the guide deputed to accompany Bimal Dey, speaks

Ever since the Dalai Lama left this country, we have been living in hope every day of our lives and dreaming of an independent Tibet..... We get to hear that the Dalai Lama is visiting places like Paris, London and New York. People

extending their support to him and bringing pressure to bear on China so that it is forced to grant Tibet its autonomy. The Dalai Lama will return to Lhasa once more and the flags of an independent Tibet will surround the Potala. I am now thirty. How long can I keep waiting?..... (299)

The Tibetans living marginalized lives in Lhasa under Chinese hegemony do not want to leave Tibet and die as refugees in another country. They want to live in Tibet but on their own terms with a life of dignity and a separate identity. The patient and conciliatory attitude of the Dalai Lama leaves many young Tibetans restive and belligerent against the Chinese.

Dey affirms the unchangeable nature of Tibet. Despite rampant Chinese intrusion he finds the “mystical beauty of the mountains had not forsaken it”. (336) He also sees hope in Tibet opening up for tourists because with tourism boosting the economy he feels resources will be generated for the restoration and upkeep of the temples and monasteries. Along with the economic advantage, more and more people from the outside world will become aware of the predicament Tibet finds itself in. According to Dey, “Tibetans are urgently in need of the inspiration and energy that the advent of people from the world outside can bring. And, perhaps the clarion call for freedom will come along the very path that has only just been opened.” (336)

Bimal Dey's **The last time I saw Tibet** and Lama Govinda's **The Way of the White Clouds** are classic examples of the spiritual travelogue. They explore the wonders of travel and the fulfillment of reaching the destination just as much as they narrate the rigours of renunciation and the revelation of wisdom. □

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Psychological Imbalance in the Characters of Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie

* P. Bagavathy Rajan

Amanda Wingfield, a middle aged woman, her daughter Laura Wingfield and her son Tom Wingfield are the pivotal characters in Tennessee Williams' masterpiece The Glass Menagerie. The background for the play is the American civil war that lasted from 1861 to 1865. The main cause for the civil war was slavery. The South American mainly relied on cotton plantation. The plantation work was supported by the labour of black slaves. So the aristocratic plantation owners of South America wanted to continue slavery. But the North American had contrary views and supported industrialization. In the war the South were defeated. Thus the patrician life led by the South American came to an end. The result of the war created an indelible mark in their mind. Consequently, they led a psychologically imbalanced life.

Amanda Wingfield is the representative character of the above mentioned quality. She dwells in her past glory that she enjoyed at Blue Mountain, Mississippi. She quite often recollects how she has entertained 17 gentlemen caller at Mississippi when she was young:

Amanda: *One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountains - your mother received - Seventeen! - gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them*

all. (Scene I) P.40.

At St. Louis actually she leads a miserable life. She wishes to have a decent life for her son. She tries her best to find a husband for her daughter. But in reality Jim O'Connor is the only gentleman caller who arrives. Her daughter Laura couldn't entertain him owing to her shyness and inferiority complex. At this point Amanda Wingfield put up the role of an aristocratic Southern lady. Even her own son Tom was shocked and embarrassed to see her mother in frocks.

Thus her past glory haunts her like a ghost. It has been imprinted in her unconscious mind. As in the words of David Daiches:

"It is the basic assumption of Psychoanalysis that the acts of every person are influenced by the forces of the unconscious".

The present scenario is entirely different. She fails to strike a balance between the past and the present.

Laura Wingfield lives in a world of illusion. She failed to have contact with the real world. Her failure at Soldan High School and Rubicam's business college made her to lead a lonely life. She developed inferiority complex. This was because of her mother's dominating personality. She fails to face the reality. When Jim O'Connor arrives, she refuses to let him in. At this Amanda scolds her:

Amanda:..... Why can't you and your brother be normal people? Fantastic whims and behaviour. (Scene VI) P.69.

Amanda Wingfield constantly pricks at her daughter and she didn't allow her daughter to be normal. She forces her daughter to behave like a South American Lady; to this idea Amanda Wingfield herself was a victim. Laura really loves her mother. She couldn't bear the sufferings of her mother:

Laura: *Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' Mother in the museum! (Scene II) P. 44*

So she tries to please her at the risk of her individuality and ultimately loses her individuality.

Tom Wingfield wanted to become a poet. But he end up in the warehouse, which was frustrating for him. He tried to escape from the sordid reality by indulging himself in frequenting theatres. He feels that the act of watching movie alone is meaningful. His attempt to find a partner for his sister failed. His selection was wrong. When he finds that things at home are no longer manageable, he left home to join the Merchant Marine. Even in this attempt he fails.

Thus the most important characters Amanda, Tom and Laura, around whom the entire plot revolves, couldn't strike a balance between the past and the present; illusion and reality. As a result they suffer and lead a disturbed life. □

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BHAGAT'S "ONE NIGHT @ the CALL CENTER": ITS RELEVANCE TODAY

* Dr. Suguna Patnaik

Shashi Tharoor comments, "While traditional India sleeps, a dynamic young cohort of highly skilled, articulate professionals works... earning salaries that were undreamt of by their elders..." He further observes, 'When the story of the new India is written, Call Centers will have to play a large part in the narrative'. [Shashi on Sunday, Sunday Times of India, Bhubaneswar National, December 30, 2007, P.12]

Indian economy was on a downturn, unemployment problem was acute when outsourcing boom created an atmosphere of "India shining" by creating unprecedented employment opportunities with quite high pay-packages in comparison to other jobs. The outsourcing industry emerged as the symbol of the country's rising power.

The odd working hours and stressful job profiles of Call Center employees lead them to sleep disorders and depression.

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The employees are prone to leading unhealthy life styles. Beneath the superficially alluring pay-packages, rewards and high life-style, there lies constant uncertainty, humiliation and a threat of being thrown out of job anytime. Here comes the relevance of Chetan Bhagat's second novel 'One Night @ The Call Center'. Bhagat studies thread-bare the living conditions of the employees at the Call Centers and advises them to treat this job not as an "end-all", but as a stepping-stone to reach higher goals of life.

The book presents a very interesting story of six agents at the Connexions Call Center one night. Writing in a lucid language the narrator gives the exploits of the agents of the Call Centers of American companies. They are identified at the work-place with names familiar to the Americans to keep their own identity confidential. They need patience, politeness and firmness to appease the American psychology. They are given accent-training to deal with the clients successfully. By narrating the experience of six agents at the Connexions Call Center one night, the narrator throws enough light on the narrowing work-condition at the call-centers. The clients are very aggressive and abusive. For example, a client shouts, "You bloody will help me smart ass". (P.120) Some one else humiliates, "Oh really, now some brown kid will tell me what to do". (P.122)

Such humiliation is really challenging to the young blood at the teen - age or in early twenties. Each agent comes across hundreds of irritating Americans screaming into their ears in the span of one night. In addition to this harassment by the clients, the agents are put to mental torture by the local boss in the name of termination of jobs for down-sizing or right-sizing the staff. He is perverse to the agents to gain good-will of the company with a posting in America. The agents bear resentment to the boss, Bakshi by name, as "he is stupid" and more than that "he is evil". (P.153)

Fear of losing jobs makes the agents brood. They observe,

machine” P.127). With frustration they realize that except for daily trips to pizza-huts or spending Rs.300/- for a cocktail, there is no meaning to their lives. They repent for wasting their youth to work-pressure and insecurity. They lament, “Two generations ago, the youth got this country free.... We have just been reduced to a high spending demographic”. (P. 253)

The writer advises the call center agents to treat this job as a stepping stone to a better career. He reminds, “With money in your wallet the world gives you some respect and lets you breath”. (P.18) Employers require fewer but more highly skilled and qualified employees. As Indians occupy an important place in global scenario for their skills in English and talent in work-place, they can reach great heights with higher qualification. There is still some shortage of qualified employees in many sectors. So the Indian youth need to earn like their Western-counterparts, and save money unlike them, for funding further education, so that parents will not have to bear the entire burden of heavy expenditure on this account. Mr Bhagat suggests that by applying their intelligence, imagination, self-confidence; and even failure, the agents should work with determination to retain their jobs by capitalizing on the dependence of the clients on Indian brains. In this context, the writer says, “a thirty-five-year-old American’s brain and IQ is the same as a ten-year-old Indian’s brain” (P. 53). So by creating confusion, panic and fear in the minds of the Americans, the call center agents can manage call traffic go up, so that more and more unemployed youth will get some employment.

In order to sustain the economic growth of India, Call Centers are the first place to reckon with to improve the economic conditions of all as even now “800 million people are forced to live on less than half a dollar a day” and in spite of a few billionaires “large swathes of the country are in the grip of poverty ...” (Kautilya Kumar. Counter View: The Times of India, May 10, 2008, P. 16).

There is a realistic mention of many issues as we find them in Indian families. There is also a mention to the recent/ contemporary international affairs like America’s war with Iraq, and seeking labour from China. Incorporating various spices of love, romance, jealousy, fear, uncertainty, spiritualism, etc to make the novel interesting, the novelist emphasizes that Call Centers are inevitable for ‘India Shining’. □

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TRIBAL LIFE AS DEPICTED IN MYTHOLOGY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SHABARI AND EKLAVYA

* C.R. Rajashree

Legends are the stories about the past which are based on some historical events, generally focused on human heroes. Myths are sacred stories concerning the distinct past particularly the creation of the world generally focused on Gods. Myths are narratives about divine or heroic beings, passed down traditionally and linked to the spiritual or religious life of a community, endorsed by rulers or priests. The word ‘myth’ simply means a traditional story. The words ‘myth’ and ‘mythology’ are used for sacred and traditional narratives. The sources of mythology are the *Vedas*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*.

The word ‘tribe’ suggests simple folk living in hills and forests signifies a colourful people for their dance and song. The tribals are the earliest among the present inhabitants of India. They are still in

primitive stages and are far off from the impact of modern civilization. They are the people who live in forest areas, hilly regions and deep valleys. They are known by various names - animists, jungle people, *adivasis* and so on. Some of the tribes found in India are *Toda*, *Badaga*, *Bhil*, *Gonds*, *Khasi*, *Chang*, *Koli*, *Soliga* etc. They are facing many problems like the problem of Separation, Cultural problems, Social problems, Educational problems, Language, Health and Sanitation problems etc. They are labeled as ignorants, animal killers nomads and many more. It is not that these people are facing these problems recently. They are facing these problems since ages.

As far as Hindi Literature is concerned, the period called *Bhakthi Kaal* has got its own importance. It consists of many precious gems of collections of poets like Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas, Meera and many more. Out of these the main stories which inspire and motivate our day to day life in many ways are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These two epics have the essence of life, and examples of ideal character which forms the basis of an ideal society. I would like to take a tribal character from each epic, they are the very well known *Shabari* and *Eklavya*.

Literature are full of many mythological characters in different categories like poems, prose, drama, short stories and many more. These characters are regarded as a source of inspiration for many writers, especially poets. In Hindi Literature initially many works were done in poems and later on followed by prose.

Ours being a traditional society more emphasis were given on the religious aspects. The triumph of truth, love and affection, brotherhood, unity, peace and harmony along with many moral instructions were given through stories from mythology. Mythological characters inspire us in many ways. Each writer according to his taste and subject chooses a challenging topic and tries to portray the character of his choice, perhaps modernizing them without disturbing their originality. The message conveyed through these mythological stories and their character has more impact in the minds of people especially children.

A 20th century Hindi poet named Naresh Mehta, in his life span wrote many poems out of which *Shabari* is his unique collection wherein he has portrayed the life of a tribal character in *Ramayana* who offers a plum to Lord Rama with lots of love and affection after tasting each fruit as she wanted to give the sweetest fruit to the Lord. She is born in a tribal colony who was named *Shramana* by her parents. Right from her young age she condemned animal killing, and hunting. She was somehow attracted by spirituality, and her thirst to know about God made her listen to the discourses of *Matang Rishi* who had an ashram in the jungle. She knew that she was an outcaste and she can't listen to the lecture of the great *Rishi* after seeking his permission. So she used to hide behind a tree and enjoy listening to the speeches. She even requested the *Rishi* to accept her as his disciple. The *Rishi* too pleased by her approach, attitude, devotion, and eccentric nature accepts her as his disciple. This created a disturbance in the *ashram* and the other disciples in the *ashram* showed their opposition as to how can an outcaste tribal woman acquire knowledge equally among the Brahmins and learned scholars, but all the efforts went in vain and nobody dared to speak against their *guru*. Shabari had to face many obstacles and later on, seeing her dedication and sincerity the *ashram* people started to respect her. Not only that they put their heads down, but also apologized for their deeds.

In yet another poem 'Eklavya', written by Dr. Ramkumar Verma, another tribal character comes into picture named Eklavya - a person known for *gurubhakti*, hard work and sincerity. He comes in the story of Mahabharata. All of us are very well aware of the story of this boy who cuts and gives his thumb as a *guru dakshina* to guru Dronacharya. Guru Dronacharya was the *guru* of the Kauravas and the Pandavas who taught them everything including the archery. During one such time of teaching Eklavya approached Guru Dronacharya and requested him to teach the art of archery just to protect the herd of sheep and cows while grazing, as many sheep and cows became the prey of wild animals. Dronacharya was not very keen in teaching him archery and he refused to teach him this art. Moreover the art of archery was not

boy like Eklavya. I needn't repeat the whole story as you all are aware of this.

The main point to be highlighted in both of these stories is that Shabari, being a tribal and that too a woman, was devoid of spiritual learning. Similarly being a tribal boy Eklavya was denied from learning the art of archery. The problem which Shabari and Eklavya were facing is still continuing today. At present too, the tribals are not allowed to gain knowledge of their choice. They are not allowed to choose a career of their wish and the list of their problems goes on and on.

Thanks to the government who has laid many plans for the upliftment of the tribal people. Many Self-Help-Groups (SHG) and voluntary and non-voluntary agencies and organization join their hands in extending their services and activities for these tribals. Today even though many tribal plans are implemented, it requires to gain momentum. □

Cora's perception of life in Alice Childress', A Short Walk

* A. Selvalakshmi

Life is mysterious. For some, it 'is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing.' But for others life is delightful and adventurous. Perhaps it all depends on how one perceives life. As beauty lies in the beholder's eyes, the concept of life differs from individual to individual. One of the characters in Alice Childress' novel, A Short Walk views life as a short walk from the cradle to the grave. But in the very same novel, the principal character, Cora considers life in a different perspective. Life holds no meaning to a rolling stone, but Cora manages to get momentum and significance in the end and the following analysis of Cora's experiences will deepen our insight into life so that one will become cautious to choose one's partner and be loyal to her/him in all races.

Cora, the adopted daughter of Bill James and Etta was being brought up in a racial climate where the black people were forced to obey the rules and regulations of the White community. Even as a child, she learnt from her adopted parents that the White used to cut off the coloured (Black) people's ears if they showed interest in reading and writing. Cora could not comprehend the reason of this meanness of the White. However she was able to register in her mind that all was not well and right in the world of the nigger circle. What pained the child was that the Blacks, even if they were rich, were permitted to do any commercial activity only after the poor Whites had finished their deal.

Where ever the Whites entered, they wanted to be doubly lucky. If they happen to go to any play acting, they desired to be amused by the show as well as by the so called unrefined and uneducated behavioural mode of the Black. The Black people were always treated as an object of amusement besides being always ridiculed at.

It was in this hostile atmosphere Cora happened to watch a dramatic performance in the Minstrel show wherein a character by name Rosalinda advocated the principle of independence. On observing the play acting, Cora too wanted to be like her theatre model, Rosalinda upholding racial equality and justice. Cora's determination was to help, enlighten and uplift her community.

Cora slowly entered into an adolescent stage with its own plus and minus. She realized the sweet and sad feelings of a girl-becoming-woman. In the company of Cecil, a young orphan boy, she began to build castles in the air. However things began to take a different turn. Cecil happened to join the navy and the young girl, Cora, was entrusted with the responsibility of looking after her ailing father. The father was taken to Mountain Seeley, a healer. The superstitious belief of the black people in such healing process was being exploited by sexists like Mountain Seeley. Cora fell a prey to the ravenous desire of the healer. The young innocent girl felt, in hands of an alien, uneasy. However she tolerated the entire tragedy for the sake of her beloved father who used to be a source of mental strength to her at times of need. It

that “life is a short walk from the cradle to the grave [...] As we go along, we learn not to judge people too hard but you got to be careful who to give your deepest heart and thoughts to, because you’ll carry all those people inside for the rest of your days and that can either tear you up or else make it go smoother. But with all our best figurine, something keeps going wrong and we begin to think too little of ourselves. Well, trials keep coming finally we begin to catch on to how to live... but by that time life’s almost over”.¹

Cora wanted to fulfill the last wish of her adopted father. She began to seek the meaning of life. Life began to show its ups and downs or flights and drops. As an inexperienced girl she got involved in emotional entanglements. Cecil, Cora’s dream-lover and future-husband flew to New York and his absence intensified her immediate need to get wedded to Kojie, a middle - aged man, who was already married, proposed to Cora and she accepted the same bearing in mind that she could no more entertain the rosy side of life due to personal and familial reasons. Despite her disappointment, she vowed to be a virtuous wife. But soon her marital relationship fell apart and Cora happened to come close with Nappy, a Napoleon Ramsay who was trained in conducting shows and proving himself as a successful car dealer.

Cora happened to accidentally meet Cecil and both exchanged their individual experiences. Once again Cora and Cecil recalled their childhood memories and sweet nothings. The emotional proximity made Cecil pregnant. However Cecil for the fear of being disowned by him. Besides she was not legally separated from Kojie. Cora took efforts to abort the fetus but she could not make up her mind to execute the same. Quite surprisingly she decided to have the baby and even chose a name to suit the sex. She felt proud of the name ‘Delta’. As years rolled by, Delta grew up as her mother wished.

As a school going girl, Delta enabled her mother to recite “the Apostles creed”, an act of repentance for being inadvertent in her amorous escapades. It was almost retribution and Cora felt relieved of her guilt. If “life is a short walk” according to Bill

Cora called it a “damned first - class minstrel show... and I been sitting in front row all the way”.²

For the first time she realized that Cecil was her only man with whom she was safe and secure. The sense of belonging to Cecil made her feel that she must confess the truth that her “childhood hero” was larger than life itself. Having permitted Delta to join military to save the Black people, she was now left with a desire to reveal and affirm her love for Cecil through a post card. When she was about to post the card, she got killed amidst a social riot in Harlem and as true to her words, she completed her life which was a damned minstrel show and at the time of her death she occupied the centre of attention in the sense that the people made arrangements to take the dead-body to the hospital. □

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THE PAIN OF ANGUISH AND AGONY IN GIRISH KARNAD’S HAYAVADANA

* *Pravabati P.*

Karnad is the most famous as a playwright. His plays, written in Kannada, have been widely translated into English and all major Indian languages. When Karnad started writing plays, Kannada literature was highly influenced by renaissance in western literature. He started writing his plays drawing from historical and mythological sources to tackle contemporary themes.

Indian drama offers a different aesthetic approach from much of western theatre. In Indian plays, story-telling is the focus as opposed to the action of the story and often the action is described to the audience rather than depicted in the realist mode of most western performance. The basis of Sanskrit drama is *rasa*, Indian plays are not imitations of life but rather representations of an

* add: A.K.G. Nagar, Varadarajapuram, Uppilpalayam P.O, Coimbatore, Rock Pebbles / July - Dec.'08/P. 26

abstraction. The actor is not to represent a realistic imitation of a figure but rather to manifest an interpretation of the character. He is better termed a performer because dancing, singing, and music are always part of the performance.

Girish Karnad's Hayavadana or the talking horse is an incorporation of motifs from traditional theatre. Yakshagana, a play within a play, dolls, masks, the irreverent inversion of mock-heroic mores. India's colonial heritage is portrayed in the play. It offers a mixture of western and Indian theatrical traditions. It is based on a Sanskrit tale from Kathasaritsagara and Thomas Mann's reworking of the tale in the transposed heads. It is an Indian story retold by a western writer that is then retold again by an Indian dramatist, Karnad. The story of Kapila and Devadatta is based on a tale from Somadeva's Vetalpanchvimshika. Interwoven into the main plot is the story of Hayavadana, a horse headed man whose quest for wholeness underscores the play's exploration of identity and reality.

Hayavadana meaning 'the one with the horse's head', is named after a horse headed man, who wants to shed the horse's head and becomes human. He provides the outer panel as- in a mural within which the tale of the two friends is framed. Hayavadana, too goes to the same goddess *Kali* and wins a boon from her that he should become complete. The head is the person, Hayavadhana becomes a complete horse.

Karnad builds on the performance tradition in Hayavadana. Throughout the play he employs numerous folk theatre devices such as entry curtains, songs, puppets, masks, story-within a story plotlines and a story teller character, the Bhagavata. He acts as a narrator and sings for and about the characters in the first and third person. He often reveals their thoughts and produces the dances and prose exchanges of the performers. He is in effects a stage manager who appears on stage and directs the action of the play by providing narration. He uses the technique of mask-swapping to signify the switching of Kapila and Devadatta's head. The characters who take on the voice and persona of another character by

Karnad's fusion of Indian and western theatrical conventions reflects the story of the transposed heads. His India is the hybrid colony where cultures co-exist. All theatrical performances in India begin with the worship of Ganesha, the god who ensures successful completion of any endeavour. According to mythology, Ganesha was beheaded by Shiva, his father, who had failed to recognize his own son. The damage was repaired by substituting an elephant's head, since the original head could not be found. The elephant head questioned the basic assumption behind the original riddle. The head represents the thinking part of the person, the intellect.

He also uses his knowledge of Indian myth to draw parallels with other Hindu legends. He further strengthens his case against the brahmanical claim that the mind is superior to the body. Like any other traditional Indian theatrical performance, this play too begins with the invocation of Lord Ganesha, an elephant's head on human body, a broken tusk and cracked belly seems to be embodiment of imperfection of incompleteness.

The main plot is about two friends Devadatta, a man of intellect and Kapila, a strong physique both fall in love with Padmini. She in turn, loves both of them. Jealousy and suspicion soon leads to a double suicide by both men. They are brought back to life by the goddess *Kali*, but with their heads exchanged on the other's body. The rest of the play focuses on how the bodies gradually transform to match their heads and how Padmini is left with discontentment. A sub-plot is the story of Hayavadana, the talking horse born with a horse's head and a human body who wants to become totally human. There are other characters in the play who act as stage heads and musicians that Bhagavata directs and the talking dolls that provide comic relief to the play.

The play was performed in the style of street theatre drawing upon traditions of rural folk theatre as well as anti-naturalist and fantastic traditions in western theatre. A colourful story of lives that are universal in human feelings, desires, needs, one that transcends time and boundaries of race.

An actor stumbles on the stage the National anthem, while another actor leads in Padmini's son- a mute serious boy clutching his two dirty dolls. Hayavadana returns to the stage, now with the body, as well as the head of a horse. Kali has answered his prayers by eliminating his human physical characteristics altogether. He still has a human voice and sings patriotic songs. He starts laughing when he sees the actors and Bhagavata. His laughter and human voice infect the mute child with laughter and the child begins to speak and laugh normally. The child's laughter causes Hayavadana to lose the last shreds of his human nature and he begins to neigh like a horse. Karnad thus uses the logic of myth to create a double, reciprocal exchange of functions that allows for resolution. Hayavadana and the boy in effect complete each other. The one, as a human child returned to the fold of society and the other as fully animal.

In Yakshagana, the entry of the figure is accompanied by dancing and the gradual lowering of the curtain which culminates in a coup de theatre as the gods or demons are revealed in all their costumed and masked splendour. Karnad follows the mechanics of the device, the theatrical effect is precisely the opposite. Hayavadana keeps ducking out of sight until finally ' the curtain is lowered right down to the floor. Hayavadana is sitting on the floor hiding his head between his knees.' The device is repeated in the same ironic, anticlimactic way for the appearance of Kali before the beheading scene.

The play stresses the fact that there is an element of incompleteness in every self. Human beings are driven to miserable realization that he or she is destined to be incomplete. The incompleteness of Hayavadana helps to break the reticence of the child a product of an incomplete relationship. □

SHERLOCK HOLMES – THE ICON OF DETECTION

* K. Sangeetha

“To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” - Tennyson

There are a few characters of fiction that step out of their books and become known almost universally. The literary eminence of their creators seems to bear no relation to their fame. Probably the best known of them all is Sherlock Holmes who has been described as “the most famous man who never lived.”

Conan Doyle's Holmes' is a detective with a good sense of discrimination, knowledge of human psychology, good analytical power, keen sense of observation, ability to arrive at cause from the existing effect, good communication skills, association of the known with unknown, unfailing perseverance, determination, courage etc - qualities which make him unravel the crime and expose the criminal.

With the Sherlock Holmes stories, Doyle conforms to Poe's great original model Dupin and transforms the genre forever with his inimitable blend of super sleuth, sidekick, setting, science, series, structure and sensibilities. Doyle himself often acknowledged his debts to Poe. When a follower of tradition enlarges upon a genre, the result is rather the metamorphosis of the original into a larger and more pleasing shape. Doyle perfects what Poe had begun. Holmes epitomizes what Dupin had only exemplified. As Symons writes, “Conan Doyle acknowledged his debts particularly to Poe, but like Shakespeare he transformed everything he borrowed.”

Arthur Conan Doyle was born on 22nd May 1859, in Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland. He got his medical degree from the University of Edinburgh, where he studied under Prof. Joseph Bell. He was inspired by this professor's analytical bent of mind and his power of observation and deduction. Holmes was modelled on this professor.

Doyle's first detective novel, A Study in Scarlet appeared

Sherlock Holmes, *The Sign of Four* was published in 1890. In 1891 a collection of short stories, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was published by Strand magazine. In 1892, he published *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. He wrote to his mother that he thought of slaying Holmes and winding him up for good since he took Doyle's mind from better things.

In December 1893, in the story *The Final Problem*, Holmes and his archrival Moriarty plunged into the Reichenbach Falls, Switzerland. "This revelation touched off a display of public emotion. More than twenty thousand strand readers cancelled their subscription immediately and young men and women appeared on the streets in black armbands and veils respectively. They were in mourning, not for the demise of a popular serial character, but for the collapse of a dam of justice and reason in a rising tide of incompetence and evil".

Public pressure compelled Doyle to restore Holmes. After an absence of eight years, he returned to the strand in 1901 in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a novel length adventure dated before Holmes fall. It remains the most popular of his published exploits.

People who never read mysteries have read *The Hound of Baskervilles*.

Holmes came back to life in *The Adventure of the Empty House*. This came in a collection entitled *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* in 1904. Another long story named *The Vally of Fear* was published in 1914 followed by the collection *His Last Bow* in 1917. The last set of adventures *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* got published in 1927.

"Doyle was also fervent advocate of justice and personally investigated two closed cases which led to imprisoned men being released. The first case in 1906 involved a shy half-British half-Indian lawyer named George Edalji who had allegedly planned threatening letters and mutilated animals. Police were set on Edalji's conviction though the mutilation continued even after their suspect was jailed. It was partly as a result of this case that the court of Criminal appeal was established in 1907. So Conan

miscarriages of justice. The second case – that of Oscar Slater, a German Jew and a gambling den operator, convicted of bludgeoning an 82 year old woman in Glasgow in 1908 – excited Doyle's curiosity because of inconsistencies in the prosecution case and a general sense that Slater was framed".

In the Victorian Society, where law and order were well established, steps were taken to prevent and expose crime. Criminals did exist, but the tendency to correct social evils was prevalent. People preferred individuals tackling the evils of society. This might be due to the flexibility in working with private persons. There were no more trials in courts, or cross questions by the official police or detective force. People could boldly state their cases and get help. No case was petty or trivial. Any problem pestering their lives could be solved, though it need not always involve murder or robbery. This sort of wish-fulfilment was possible with a private detective. In such society a detective like Holmes upholding justice was always welcome. Holmes' love of air-play and justice illustrates the moral and ethical appeal of the detective story.

Some may argue that a great deal of the fame of Holmes comes from the great illustrations of the artists of the day, like Sidney Padget, who helped immortalise the hero, together with the early and repeated success of the character on both stage and screen. It is certainly true. But there must have been great reasons for these stories to have been caught up so eagerly by illustrators and dramatists.

Stephen Knight opines that to become a best seller like Conan Doyle, a writer of the crime stories has to embody in the detective a set of values which the audience finds convincing – forces which they can believe will work to contain the disorders of crime. Science dominated the Victorian era. People became more and more inclined towards analysis, logic and reason. Holmes catered to the state of mind of his fellowmen. In the first place, Holmes stands for science - that exciting force in the public mind. He can explain the causes of material evidence either by "the Science of deduction" as Doyle calls it, or through his Knowledge of forensic facts and criminal history. As Julian Symons points out,

Victorian reverence for Science was strong, so that a detective who claimed that he approached criminal cases by scientific methods had an audience waiting for him.”

The Holmesian cycle offers the spectacle of a hero triumphing again and again by means of logic and scientific method. It is also worthwhile to note that Watson and his creator Conan Doyle were men of medical science. It is obvious therefore that science was a vividly credible force against crime.

But science also had its inherent drawbacks as many people found facts and objective science potentially anti-humane. Doyle avoided such a bad aura by imbibing the second major value in his great detective – that equally potent force i.e., individualism. Holmes is not only a man of objective science. He is also aloof, arrogant and eccentric. His exotic character humanizes his scientific skills. He is a lofty hero, but is crucially a human one.

With any work in any genre that accomplishes transformation, a creative synthesis occurs between the writer's intentions on the one hand to adhere to and fulfill the conventions of the tradition, and the writer's aspiration, on the other hand, to both excel at and transcend the tradition. This dual ambition – to fulfill yet to reform, to satisfy expectation, yet to pleasingly surprise – is what makes a successful literary work. □

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A CRITICAL NOTE ON FOLKTALES AND THE INDIAN ORAL NARRATIVE TRADITION

** Dr. Muralidhar L. Yadhav*

In Indian context oral narratives as they are very often referred to as the oral traditions and which are an inevitable part of the Indian folk culture are known for their charm. It is essential to study these traditions, for their imparting of socio-moral values through oral performance, and more particularly their contribution in the process of building up of a society based on some of the most cherished ideals and values. These narratives play a very significant role in the perpetuation and proliferation of human values across all other constraints pertaining to the categories of class, caste, race, religion and Nationality. Among other traditions such as ballads and the regional epics, the folk tales coming through oral narrative tradition have their own place and significance in Indian context.

The oral traditions in India have always been found to be as an essential aspect of the social life culture. The short and the long narratives in the form of folk tales are known for their motifs and themes that help define and render the Indian culture meaningful. They do have potential which might (if given expression and exposure on a global scale) be able to surpass the ideal conditions of the being of this nation (India) for all its excellence and greatness. **Kathasutra, Panchtantra, The Tales of Aesope**, tales from **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata**, the tales based on Vedic scriptures, particularly from **Rigveda** are known for their contribution in the field of oral literary tradition with a legacy of not only recreation and amusement but also edification, socialization, social control and a number other attainments without which the growth of a civilization is not possible.

It is very interesting to know that the art of story-telling irrespective of its power and potentials has been neglected for a number of reasons. These reasons could be found in the current scenario, which is a complex of moral values guided by the forces of

scientific materialism on the one hand and the socio-ethnic and religio-spiritual aspirations on the other.

It is at a juncture like this we need to probe into our past, which is full with rich and glorious traditions. Oral narratives are no doubt, the part of this tradition, and they need to be persevered as a historical heritage. The Vedic scriptures and the native epic narratives have been the inexhaustible source of the tales of bravery and adventure, of love and war woven around the heroes and heroines in them. It is for these sacrifices and the values by which these celebrities lived, we need to revise this ordeal and make an attempt to retrieve and reconstruct our response to them. The significance of these tales remains unchallenged even in the wake of the present global context, which is categorized by the crises in environmental threats, information technology and human relations and international relations. It is observed that these crises have endangered the human values to such an extent that the human race as a whole is almost on the verge of collapse. The present article seeks to make a comprehensive statement on the cultural aspects of the folktales from the ancient scriptures like Jatakas, Kathasutra in the classical tradition, and make an attempt to provide them with a context in which they could sustain and survive in their moral force.

The article focuses on the motifs, the deliverance and the purposes that go a long way into the making of this tradition rather than on the form and the specific techniques of story telling.

In view of the limitations pertaining to the vastness of the genre, I would like to concentrate on some general observations that have been forwarded by the critics, and historians and men of letters. The scope of oral narratives is too huge to be assessed with such an article like this. Therefore, I have tried to be modest in my attempt.

It is in the light of the observations made by the scholars in the field, this article may be taken as an attempt to review the tradition as guiding force into the potentials of its values. The major preoccupation of this tradition is to be found in its endeavour

principles and values, which are found at the base of all the cultures in the globe.

An act of literary creation is a milestone in the development of any culture irrespective of its form and style. Myths, legends and folktales from this point of view reflect upon the fundamental realities of the human conditions. World's great classics might evoke and organize the archetypes of universal human experience but even then the place and the significance of folktales remain intact for the reason that they lie at the beginning of literature. It is realized that the plots and situations, in these myths and folktales form a constant source of literary inspiration.

In pre-literate societies, oral literature was widely shared. It was an integral part of the society, just like basic amenities, like food and shelter. The oral performances were available to the whole community. As society evolved in its various aspects, an elite literature began to be written and distinguished from the folk literature. With the invention of writing, this separation was accelerated and with the development of the art of printing it raised to the higher level i.e. in a book form artistically organized and written as a work of art.

Prior to this evolution, illiterate common people experienced folk-tales and folk-songs (oral narratives) orally, more or less collectively. A very large number of these narratives contain elements that are common to folk-ballads from Western Europe. The central theme of folklore, indeed, are found all over the world. They represent great philosophical and psychological constants, archetypes of experience common to the human species and it is seen that these constants and experiences are used again and again by elite men of letters (1977:132) in their literature. Certain theorists believe that folk-songs and folktales in the East and the West were produced collectively. Sometimes it is said in mockery that these narratives (almost all oral) were produced collectively "by the tribe sitting around the fire and grunting in unison". However it may not be taken literally but it is realized looking at the thematic similarities of the tales and the songs that they must have begun

trans-communicated by means of oral tradition from one generation to the next for centuries. It is in this sense that one can say that they were written at one and the same time collectively.

Thus it is realized that the origin of the folk-tales is from the common conscience, the collective conscience. The power of these tales lies in their being which is constant, traditional and revolutionary at one and the same time and that is why they keep on circulating and transmitting from one generation to the next and more surprisingly from one country to the next. By means of their oral resonance and melody they keep on changing in their context and content in accordance with the prevailing social and cultural and even the geographic constraints of the land where they find their roots. Whatever may be the reality regarding their origin but it is for the presence of some universal principles, the moral, psychological and even philosophical constants that they are liked most everywhere. One can hardly doubt about the spell of these tales on the mind of the spectators. In this aspect the relationship between the narrator and the narratee also adds into the spell to take the grip of the mind of the listeners. The best example of this kind is found in the tale of Vikramaditya in Vetal Panchavinsati and the tales from One Thousand Arabian Nights. In the above tales this relationship becomes a metaphor of the fate of the narratee and thereby the humanity as a whole. It reminds us of man's everlasting quest for the attainment of truth. Similarly, the tales told by Gramma to her grand children, the tales narrated by the saints in the form of the holy discourses, *Kirtanas* and *Akhyayikas* in the remote village temples do have the same ability to attract and have an everlasting effect on both the young and the old people.

It is seen that in the 20th century there has been a tremendous influence of the folk literature on the elite literature - writers like Franz Kafka, Carl Sandburg, Kawabata, Yasunari Martin Bubber etc.

Since World War II the influence of folktales and folksongs upon popular literature has not been only enough, but quite determinative. Almost all hit songs and films since the mid century have

past. Not only this but the popular fiction and drama, detective stories, films and television serials deal with the same great archetypal themes coming from folktales and ballads. The plays *Hayawadana* and *Tughlak* by Girish Karnad may be cited for the sake of an example. It may not have been pertaining to the direct influence as such but one cannot deny the fact that the sources of this (elite literature) are the folk narratives. The folktales expose the facts about the human potentials, they do make us realize the limits within which the human minds can work. The continuity of the influence of these tales is realized in the writings of many modern writers like H.G. Wells, Garden Young, George Simenon and Raymond Chander.

As I have already mentioned that the article intends to concentrate on the socio-moral aspect of this tradition I think it is necessary at this juncture to take a review of the tales which were instrumental in playing their role in this aspect.

The Indian folklore tradition is fairly ancient. A number of tales seem to have been derived from the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*. There are tales like *Puruvara Urvashi*. Varuchi translated these tales from Sanskrit into Prakrut and later Gunadhya, one of the very ancient authorities on translation studies known as Bhashyakar, took enormous pains and edited these tales which came to be known as *Bruhat Katha*.

In India several scholars like Saheb Lal Srivastav and Srichandra Jain have attempted a comprehensive study on Indian folk culture and folk-tales in their books Folk-Culture and Oral Tradition (English) and Lok Katha Vijnyan (Hindi) respectively.

In Maharashtra, Sanskrit scholars and historians like Sadasiv Chhatre, Krushnashastry Chiplunkar, Mahadeo Kunte have contributed by means of the best collections from the early classics like Burkins' Children's Friend.

There are translation like Balmittira (1828) and tales from Aesope translated as Isaap Nitikatha (1828). Krushnashastry Chiplunkar translated the classic One Thousand Arabian Nights as Arabasthanateel Chamatkarik Gosthi in (1913) and added

another golden feather in the Marathi Bal Sahitya. A host of other men of letters like V G Apte, N G Chaphekar, S G Tate, Dr. Ketkar, Dr. Durgabai Bhagwat, Dr. R C Dhere and latest but not least Dr. Prabhakar Mande and the noted Marathi contemporary woman novelist Tara Bhavalkar are among the few names who took an enormous effort to enrich the folk literature in Maharashtra. (1966 : 01) Of course it was V. K. Rajwade, the famous historian, to use the term Lok Katha for the first time in Marathi literature and to pioneer the study of this kind for the first time on a greater scale, which was responsible to initiate the critical debate on it.

To look at this oral literary tradition from a global perspective, India deserves to be mentioned as a land having very rich heritage in this aspect which is seen in a series of works like Bruhat Katha, Panchtantra, Kathasaritsagar, Hitopadesh, Shuka Bahattari, Jatak Kathas and Jain Chumi etc. These tales flourish from ancient scriptures, majority of them from Buddhist and Vedic scriptures especially from the Jatakas and Rigved, which are known to be the first collections of folk literature in the world literature history.

It is painful to realize that the people who took serious efforts in collecting these riches in literary heritage were non-Indians. Most of them were foreigners like Mary Friar, who collected *Old Deccan Days* (1868), Miss Stoakes who collected *Indian Fairy Tales* (1880), a collection based on the folktales in the region of Ayodhya. Sir Richard Temple happens to be the first scholar to attempt a systematic classification of the folktales of India. Legends of Punjab (1983) is one of his best known collections. Among others, reference may be made to the works like Swintern's The Tales of Raja Rasul, Flora Annie Steel's The Wind Awake Stories contributing and enriching the tradition in the most satisfying manner. The contributions of the most reputed philosopher and philologist Max Muller and Theodor Benfey, the translator of Panchatantra are realised as the milestones in this field.

been told and retold for a period immemorial. What is remarkable about it is that men of various religions and the cults within them inspired the telling of these tales.

The major objectives to be realized through these narratives were the attainment of some religious truths. There is still another category of tales that deal with motifs pertaining to the contemporary social issues other than religious i.e. the purpose of entertainment. These included legends, fairy tales, romantic adventure tales, tales of bravery and fables etc.

The objective of the study of these tales facilitates the scholar to have the first hand knowledge of the culture under study. It helps sharpen the understanding of the socio-cultural realities and the conditions governing the complex process of acculturation and the "value system of a given society and civilization" (1974:02). It also gives an insight into the "universal principles of cultural dynamics and concrete rational norms capable of universal realization" (1953:698). It is in this sense that the oral narratives of any land necessarily fall under the premises of not only literature and literary studies but also the concerns of cultural anthropologists, and ethnologists. Folklorists and linguists generally concentrate on the thematic and the textual analyses of the oral narratives whereas the socio-linguists and anthropologists try to probe into the entire complex existence, the very heart of the being of the community under study. Therefore, in order to have a greater understanding of the cultural ethos and the social reality of a community, the study of its creative mind as it comes to be expressed in the form of its products like folk-tales, folk-songs, folk-music and folk-dance is a must. When considered from this point of view the oral narratives are one of the essential aspects of the life of a community and ultimately the life of the nation. India, being a nation of plural cultural identity, the studies of the folk narratives may be of great academic interest to both the groups of scholars i.e. belonging to the literary studies and social studies. The insights into the two or more than two enables a scholar to probe into the inter and the intra-cultural realities pertaining to the contemporary issues and the life of the community as a whole. According to Jan Vansing,

scientists, "oral tradition is a socially sanctioned report or a hearsay account of a testimony of the past" (1965:19).

In Indian context oral narratives are the essential aspects of the national heritage. They are the testimony of the rich cultural past of this land. They provide us with the glimpses of the ancient glory, and are instrumental in reminding us of our past which is a unique combination of both the good and the evil forces, particularly the dark and dire memories inflicted upon us by the foreign invaders and the British colonialists. The strength of these tales lies in their ability to sustain and prevail upon the popular conscience and transmit the human values from one generation to the next with an everlasting spontaneity and hence they deserve to be studied with all seriousness. It is time that they appear on the academic agenda, in the syllabi of our universities. This might invoke our awareness about the cultural past and enable us to realize the vitality of our present socio-cultural reality, since it is a "concomitant understanding of the past and the present". (1965:192) It is realized that such an understanding lies at the base of social and literary studies. Studies of this kind need to be promoted from scientific point of view and with concrete objectives such as creating a deep sense of gratitude and reverence towards the nation, creating an atmosphere in which the palpation and the preservation of human values is possible. □

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MEMORY AND VISION : A STUDY IN NIRANJAN MOHANTY's OH THIS BLOODY GAME !

Dr. Bikram Kumar Mohapatra

A July morning of 2008 has swept away the soul from the physical body of Niranjan Mohanty with a severe cardiac arrest. Indian English Poetry can never get such a poet once again. He had greatest commitment to literature as a whole. As a critic he has also excelled his position. On him more praising words can be pronounced, more voices can be spoken up but Prof. Mohanty will never appear on his desk to write new poem or criticism.

Niranjan Mohanty has given expression to each and every custom of human life. His surrealistic approach to poetry, symbolic maturity and recollection of past give artistic flavour to his poetry. His exploration of past shrouded in silence is a powerful theme in his poetry which in juxtaposition with the present brings to light the myriad hues of life. Tradition and change for Mr. Mohanty are just two sides of the coin. He values tradition; at the same time he accepts the change as it is essential for a holistic evolution of life.

As a representative poet of Orissa he makes clear both the virtues and follies of Oriya life. If he upholds virtues with humility, he also acknowledges the follies of the Oriya life.

Self reflexivity is an essential feature of his poetry for which he could be considered as a post modern poet. Tradition, myths, legends, historical relics, oral tradition contribute to the self –reflective perspective of his poetry. Life portrayed by Mohanty speaks for itself.

He does not act as a spokes-person. His matured way of understanding life is reflected in his poetry. His symbols are broad and complex based in the network of ideas and thoughts.

Mohanty, like Jayanta Mahapatra broods over the loss of tradition and the loss of psychic steeped in stories, myths and tra-

the silence of the past. The silence of Mohanty like Jayanta Mahapatra is a site for the rise of self consciousness of race. It is this silence which speaks about the totality and heterogeneity of Oriya life.

Mohanty meticulously shows that life exists not only in present form but it also has its base in the silent past. His poems act as the reminder of the fact that human life not just consists of the present with all its tangible forms, it is also comprised of the past with all its abstract forms. He projects in his poetry how the unseen aspect of life comprising of the experience and emotion really count. Human being may born and may die but lives through these emotion and coherence. His poetry gives a concrete shape to the emotion and experience. It is the poet in Mohanty who unites the underlying thoughts and gives them the wings.

So far as poetical works are concerned, Mohanty has published different volumes of poetry like ***Silencing The Words, Oh This Bloody Game!, Prayer to Lord Jagannath, Life Lines, On Touching You and Other Poems, Krishna*** etc. Most of has poems have been published in India and abroad.

Mohanty is very much inquisitive in his second volume of verse, ***Oh This Bloody Game!***. It unfolds the varied experiences of life that brood over a broad spectrum of philosophical enquiry in the core of things. The inquisitive mood is enriched with the congenital isolation, suffering, obsession and fear of death with the blending of philosophical amalgam in experience of reality as well as in poetic fancy. The volume consists of fifty-two poems as a whole. Each poem has the individual identity. The thematic structure moves round the diversity of subject matters like history, culture, heritage, temple ruins, ceremony of silence, river, speech-story of self, rainy invocation, psychic progress and philosophical implications. The subsequent poetic expression is inter woven with the thread of aesthetic relapse in to nostalgia, that offers the instance where reality is often confused with the superficialities. The relationship of his poetic idiom and experience seems natural. His visionary world, as constructed in his poetry, is full of metaphors and symbols. His way of interpreting the world opens a carving

passion for life and loving. His consciousness for the aesthetic realm always remains subtle with the expression of linguistic grandeur. In the context of linguistic interference, George Steiner maintains, “ where consciousness communicates with itself and outward is a thoroughly different linguistic context, a different psychology may be in order” (82). As an Indo-English poet, Mohanty’s dialectical intricacy is indebted to the native as well as the acquired window language, English. The latter is outstanding, more edifying having modest accomplishment of poetic language and poetic psychology. Here only Mohanty sustains the intellectual and stylistic subtlety with the inevitable function of matured feeling and experience. Very often poetic sensibility conditioned by language is that provides the poetic subtlety. As the greatest Indo–Anglian poet Kamala Das points out in “An Introduction”:

*It voices my joys, my Longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cowing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears
Is aware.*(15-20)

Mohanty maintains a better relationship between poetic idiom and experience. The language seems appropriate for the experience that he sustains in his poetry. His poetic sensibility keeps assessing his experience. He has the originality of thought and reveals a kind of poetry that appears as the liberation of self, the inner freedom.

His first poem of the volume is “My Ancestors”. Recollection of past seems the most at ease in its own internal mechanism. There is the astounding similarity in the process of poetic renovation sustaining the bleak, gloomy or glorious past that makes a potent influence in the writings of three prominent Oriya poets writing in English, Jayanta Mahapatra, Bibhu Padhi, and Niranjan Mohanty. Mahapatra looks back to his deserted past and produces well-focused image whose nuances invariably extend beyond mere poetic description. Padhi holds an affectionate world where his

move on. But for Mohanty, ancestors have become the guiding force. He listens “their hymns of love” that provides the joy, as he says, “an unknowable joy/ that whitens my yellow year” (11-12). The irony reveals an enrichment and maturation of sensibility that come through interpersonal realities as the benevolent force:

*I grow rich with voices;
The birds of their bliss
flying all around me,
And I forget my self.
A dumb light from the stars
Guides my ways, my knotted ways.*(12-18)

Search for roots is the very common poetic establishment of the contemporary Indian English poets that leads to the rediscovery of self. Mohanty consciously handles this spirit. He is nonetheless articulate in his poems like “History (i)” and “History (ii)”. In “History (I)” he excels in sustaining the idea that history is like a net that drags many things to the shore. The image of net becomes authentic when he says: “The net never knows what it drags/the fisherman knows it” (5-6). History is the record of events. The poet has gone deep into its path where there is “the ruined temple”, “the flaming horses gallop”, and the hunger “curls up like the ochre of snake”. Again the poet contemplates his grandmother’s stories of ghosts, devils and witches. Ruminating the past, the poet stands on the present and tries to learn the essence of the past:

*My unwilling eyes close before me
a world, unverified.*

I tried to learn the language of a stone (37-39)

“History (ii)” recounts many more complicated concerns that chisel poetic thoughts. Being lonely, he is burdened with the weight of woe and becomes “a stone, unfeeling/and sedentary”, the silent witness of all events. These events are his own, for which he is depressed. Despite the unpleasant depression the poet has a love seeking heart. But he faces selfishness as the stumbling block. Being lonely, loving and dreaming appear as tiresome, when none of the dreams come true is also painful. But the poet accepts loneliness as blessing:

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*But I have chosen to be lonely
for loneliness has its secret roots
secretness of joy.*(42-44)

In a cyclic order the poet projects the feelings of adolescent period: how he searched his metaphor in the eyes of a school going girl, he faces the clash of reality versus imagination in his adulthood and again dwindles his form wriggling through the retrospective journey towards childhood.

*I know if I am to be wise, I must rock
On the cradle once again
I must learn alphabets, the use of words
and their oozing music.*

I am yet to know what pushes one to history. (56-60)

But for A.K. Ramanujan, history changes slowly, ‘changes sometimes during a single conversation’. In his “History” Ramanujan sustains an unsparing evolution of experience due to the death of great – aunt. The indescribable feeling of loss is reflected on the incurious face of the little aunt. The shadowy state of repose and stillness is avoided at the end:

*And the dark
stone faces of my little aunt
acquired some expression at last.* (58-61) .

For Rmanujan history dangles itself between silence and expression but for Mohanty it brings many things to silence and loneliness.

History is wisdom. To look into history is wise. Most of the Indian English poets brood over the mythical past for the better poetic journey. Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the prominent poets writing in English who has the better introspection and poetic analysis over this subject matter. But the “History II” of Mohanty reflects his luminous personal events rightly attached to the growth and development of circumstantial existence. But on the other hand “The Sun Temple at Konark” reflects the history for history sake. Here Mohanty speaks about the history related to the exhausted past and the subsequent artistic glory which can be observed with the “Huge eyes of stones stare everywhere like grand fathers

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His vision of past is often mingled with present in grief. The great artistic renovation loses its glory in silence and grief:

*I have heard cries of Men : I have seen
their blood clotting on the stones,
their sweat slouching sea-word.....
.....And they taught us : only stones
do not make a temple wholesome (9-11,16-17)*

The vision of past is mingled with the appropriate innocence and sacrifice. The lone boy Dharmapada, “haunted by the morning to mission of meeting his father”, “rose high on the temple/ and the adamant stones obeyed his call” (29-30) and at last “Something was heard falling into the waters”. The spirit evokes the question on art and ignominy, art and exploitation. The subsequent poetic conclusion appears in this connection as :

*The flaming horses
stretch their neck beyond
the oozing love, and the sea of silence (37-39).*

Like Jayanta Mahapatra, Niranjan Mohanty also holds the crudity of history as the poetic passion. In Mahapatra, temple ruins, temple surrounding, abandoned monuments, lost heritage speak a lot. But for Mohanty, these aspects are not only the poetic inspiration but also they create a kind of reflective measure for the indiscriminate survey for their own replica. While observing the sequential past, he becomes a part and involves himself to share his personal view. He tries to plumb a kind of mastery, an activity so dear to his art. The poem “The Epic” denotes the subtlety of retrospective glance with a view to present”. The poet admits that he stems from the root, the ritual of events from the grandmother’s story. The two points are prominent, the past and the present :

*A strange streak of light
stems towards me, when I ,
separated by years and fears,
am caught in the one of my dying, somewhere.(17-20)*

The association of time and timelessness is a better projection of compact relationship between grandmother and the epic. Mohanty writes :

*Between the lazy, lamp-light
and my granny’s loosened skin,
the epic, twisting and turning like a kite (1-4)*

While looking beyond the past the poet consistently tries to remain attached with the sequence of time, however not in the complete physical form but in the psychic state. His “A Quiet Morning” is another poem where the benevolent quietness of the moment accumulates the essence of poetic beginning:

*This morning is the song
on peacocks – plumes
The saintly crows quicken blood
and caution me to order words
and listen to the song, ingrained (11-15)*

Mohanty sustains both reflective and introspective measures to register his poetic reactions. Both the external and the internal world are equally important for him. While weighing the significance of the world around him, he turns towards the world of dreams and memories. His ideas and images are neatly interwoven with thought, substance and passion. In his “Grass” he projects the virtuous quality of a mere grass. It is “its softness, sobriety and silence”. Grass has the unique tolerance for mutilation and the patience for the arrival of rain.

*The grass knows, not by wisdom,
but by mere passion, that his year’s
rain would rear a rare greenness
an unusual song, (13-16)*

It has become the vision of life that altogether turns to be the mission of Life:

*One knows by now.
One has something to do
With threw grass whose colourless blood
Oozes out like love (21-24)*

Similarly Jayanta Mahapatra also achieves the philosophical height in his “Grass”. Grass has become the reflective plane. It just

mirrors the ancestral past and the secrets of the poet's own. He observes an impatient sensuality on a tolerant soil in loneliness:

Now I watch something out of the mind

Scythe the grass; I know that the trees end

Sensing the almost child like submissiveness. (14-16)

The inevitable sympathy turns to the initiation of compassion and acceptance. There is the intercourse of poetic vision with the unstinted love for grass in Mohanty. But at the same time Mahapatra broods over grass to uncover the unknown, the dead, the scabs of his "dark dread".

A true poet deals with the philosophy of life. The visionary power is enriched with the images of the inner and the outer world. It stimulates the philosophy and its total significance. In "A question of variety", V.K.Gokak argues :

A poet is ordinarily a denizen of both the worlds. Nature, Love, Man and the heritage are his four fields of exploration in one direction. In another, he is on the way to metaphysical thought, passion, visionary power and spiritual illumination. He writes as a reflective poet when he stands on the threshold of the outer world and as an introspective poet when on the threshold of the inner world. (54)

Mohanty's poetic significance is based on the reception of illuminative ideas around his world and the production of innovative thoughts with the credible collectivity taking the prior as a strategy. Human personality is not at all dormant in his poetry. Events, both past and present are rightly cultivated with the presence of such personality. "Ritual is a poem where Mohanty projects the past look" is "handsomely taller than the present". He sustains the logic of our mortality that comes as a truth, defying "our hard own knowledge of life's magic / beyond certain blindness". (14-15)

It is the inevitable condition of life. Again the fondness to grow falls flat with the fear of death in "An Evening by the River".

The darkening face of the river has the attraction and subsequently absorbs the loneliness where "the Miracle of a bondage" stays. The poet gathers the truth out of the garbage heap of fears :

My fears which always

Pushes me into strange stares

Of my own death (9-11)

The darkness of the situation gallops like a medieval knight. But the poet accumulates the strength for liberation, as he says : My bloods defeated dimensions would liberate me/ from its cold, ineffectual embrace". (21-22). The celebration of loneliness is an emergent factor in the modern Indian English poetry. The contemplative mood is enriched with such loneliness. The sound, somber poetic atmosphere produces myriad thoughts. Mohanty handles loneliness for a better realization, as it also happens in Mahapatra's "An Evening Landscape by the River". "This is the kind of solitude that closes the eyes" (1). But not incidental; Mahapatra's celebration of poetry comes through the celebration of solitude. However Mohanty and Mahapatra are tied with a common attraction. Both the incident and the situation are equally powerful for them.

The words of poetry don't originate with the mere observation of solitude. A true poet looks for his own self being remained within the physical world. When there is the uproar of globalization very rare poets do so. Most of them are distracted and feel the whole world as a village. But very few of them still feel the village as the world. It is simply because these few search for their roots to establish the out right change while others accept the subsequent new identity as a perspective truth. However Mohanty, like Mahapatra holds the objective orientation for the appropriation of human reality. He broods over the essence of self even at the strange metamorphosis of situation.

Shankar Mokashi Puneekar argues:

But to be resistant to the stereotype in the tradition, to be authentic in one's response to the ambiance, to break new ground in the process of keeping faith to one's own understanding of life, these are qualities which mark an original mind whether the writer is English or Indo – English; and the opportunities the latter has to be, in the normal course of things, richer, both in inspiration and in the use of words (73).

Mohanty is a keen observer of Indian situation and Indian mind. The indigenous spirit brings the original perception of life. The revelation of thought, mood, psychic status and attitude are rightly set in his poetic world. K. Ayyappa Paniker supplements :

Perhaps there is something in the Indian situation that compels the Indian poet in English to test the efficacy of his acquired medium to deal with something as fundamental as one's own first perception of life, which by their nature are inevitably limited to the mother tongue (100)

The ceremony of silence has become a prevailing truth in many of his poems like "Crow", "Change", "A Winter Evening", "Morning", "Truth", "Ceremony of Silence", "Certain Madness", "Shush! The Tiger is Asleep" etc. Loneliness grabs the poetic atmosphere. Mohanty's verbal subterfuges pave a way for better pilgrim progress to realize dream and reality, conscious and unconscious, body and spirit, memory and vision and subsequently the clash between the physical world and the psychic world. The poetic canons like simile, metaphor and paradox are very much prominent in the physical structure of his poetry.

Mohanty rarely uses phantasm; but it is used for the better cause. To make a bridge between past and present he cunningly handles the dreams in his "Ghost". The "air darkened by dreams" and his "invisible grand father caught" there. The poet questions:

*Have I come here
To negotiate for a kindred recognition?* (23-24)

Even so, Bibhu Padhi negotiates the kindred recognition ruminating over the eerie atmosphere in his "Stranger in the House" and "Grandmother". Again the uncanny situation of being afraid of death thwarts the pace of an old man; he sits with stillness of a lonely road. He does not know "the difference between losing and being lost, beating and being beaten off. Mohanty's "The old man" speaks so. But Padhi's "old man in winter" searches hope in desperation. Here the old man standing in his own frozen words,

Mohanty's oldman is pessimistic and waiting for death, the ultimate end of life. But death has become a reflective truth for the old man in winter of Padhi who has realized the death of his only son.

Mohanty uses the figurative poetic diction enriched with paradoxes, similes and metaphors. The expressions like "losing and being lost", shadows of vultures wings dangle without "vultures" flutters like the leaves of an aged banyan tree are the example. But in case of Padhi it is formal and fortified with rich imagery. Not only fantasy but also black magic and sorcery, some times take vital terms in Mohanty as it happens in "This Moment". However he concludes that words are more powerful to avoid any external suppressing force.

In poetry rivers are well reflected. Indian English poets provide the image of their regional rivers in a better way. Rivers also create a potent influence on Jayanta Mahapatra. The mark of such significant assumption is very much clear as one reads his "Dead River" and "River". He talks about a "walking past" as he observes :

*the silted boat that will not move
tamed temple God, this river,
Sluggish centuries curled away from its bone.*

(Dead River –16-18)

Amid the deserted moments, where "Pain rolls in water's unconcern" the poet keeps on seeing shapes. "Haunted by birds of prey where strange trees grow / deep in the hills of my blood, that river flows". (River 19-20)

The strong poetic concept equally emphasizes the significant mythical past with a relevance to the living Indian present. The derivative elements related to the river are duly projected in contemporary Indian English poetry with a consideration to subjects, moods, tonalities and with the significance of imagery and diction. A.K.Ramanujan talks of "A River" which dries to a trickle in the sand but it "has enough water to be poetic about only once

Aska, Orissa, unfolds the pages of historic past, worn-out memories and the echoed ecstasy of the dry bones". The inevitable consequence that originates from the present intolerance goes away in a compromise with the moment. The poet says :

*In solitude you may not pray,
Solitude is prayer in itself, desirable
At the moment of dejection and fruition (32-34)*

The river is like an elephant; the poets are the blind to detect its entity as per their own choice and assurance.

However an authentic Indian voice is rooted with emotional assumption drawing the rivers into artistic zone. The alluring voice explicitly establishes the concept of time and timelessness. Again in "composition" Mohanty measures himself with faith. The mythical and spiritual implications crawl into his spirit assuring a pragmatic value. Ultimately he surrenders himself to the Lord who is without hand and feet and having "rotundity of his dark eyes", Jagannath. "Years" is a poem where he estimates his status in age. His grown up state sometimes shadows him, as the juvenile spirit is out from his hand. But when he listens, the euphonic cuckoo in spring, watches the greenness and enjoys the grasshoppers song and cold wind of the river, he feels himself still at his adolescence. "Nearness", "Learning" and coming to terms with myself etc talk about: where I am not about, I am without me/ the destiny dribbled thing (Learning 18-19). The realization of aesthetic nearness happens with the experience of "glum" loneliness".

The title poem "Oh This Bloody Game of Life, How Did you play Dad?" invokes endless questions about the relevance of the status of earthly life. The poet is dissatisfied with the humdrum of uneven life. The synthesis of uneven diversified implications of life create a negative force in the psychic corner of the poet. He says; "Dad, I' have become an ass, beaten by school – going children" (59-60) and again he questions:

*What then is this life, Dad?
A bundle of sunflower waiting for the sun,
the gardens? An umbrella that fools, Carry
and leave it somewhere?
A begging bowl without the beggar?*

(6 1 -

65.)

The paradoxical proposition explicitly implies nothingness as a standard value of life. Such conception may correspond to Shakespeare's interpretation of life as stated in **Macbeth**. Macbeth speaks on the last day of his life:

*Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.*

(Act v, Scene v).

The language is the rhetoric of his merely philosophical speech. It establishes the proof of pessimism. Though the poet broadly experiences the idiotic concept of life he still aspires mellow fruitfulness by creative observation. The irony is that the bloody game of life has become the philosophy of eventuality.

A group of poems of Mohanty comprehensively denotes the value added thoughts in poetic progress. The synthesis of ideas persistently creates a colourful artistic zone of the poetic sublimity and grandeur. The poems like "Wife", "of This Habit", "will a stone Settle in my Poem", "Certain Joy" "It is All Light Then", "Stone", "A Poem That Never Begins", "When a Poem Begins", "What is to Be a Poet" "A River that Flows Within you Without Your Knowing It" "Stones", "The Mind", "Making Others Believe the Language of a Stone", "A Temple Ruins", "A Poem Neither Begins Nor Ends: only Breaths and Whispers" etc unify the poetic sensibility, the beginning, growth and development of poetic mind for which Mohanty is sincerely attached to. His stone poems become the symbol of poetic condition. Mohanty lucidly reflects the childhood memory, cultural heritage, and vision of poetry, dream, and end of

appears as an immaculate conception at the end. The progress of transgression, the platonic love of soul for the supreme soul is felt with “The River Within You Flows Sea Ward”. The river is considered as the life force here. The honest mechanism formulates a mild spiritual bond.

The spiritual inclination lies in “unsubdued miraculous faith” and surpasses the “uneven joys of light and darkness” in the poem “Faith”, like that “Near the Temple” sets up an oddity on every trivial action around the atmosphere. The actions propagate a loose, seductive involvement that adversely holds the holy attitude of life. Using different paradoxical words Mohanty sustains his magnificent obsession in a satirical voice:

*This is perhaps the place where my beliefs
hang like cobwebs in the hyperbola of light
From a distinctly deadening sun. (40-42)*

“Rains in Calcutta” describes the hum-drum city life of Kolkata. The incidental intimacy with the rain is viewed from the personal angle. Jayanta Mahapatra’s “A Day of Rain ” and Bibhu Padhi’s “ Listening Through the Rain” also stand in a common accord. However, Rain in Indian – English poetry has the aesthetic reverberation. Both the subjective and the objective observations establish the interpersonal relationship in the poems like “ Good Bye” , “Order” and “A Song for Myself”. In “A Temple” Mohanty projects the picture of decay and the deserted condition of the god. “Gandhi” is such a poem where Mohanty sustains the vision of love and non- violence in the world of Mephistopheles. The last poem of the volume, “A Night That Keeps Crawling Towards My Blood” recreates the malignant tensions of interpersonal relationships through an ironic and unsparing evaluation of experiences. There is convulsing fear in the pretext of living. The idea, “a night keeps crawling towards my blood” is an irony of fear and predicament. Ultimately it becomes the touchstone of mortality. There is the “blood bath” in the temple, “bomb blast” on the street, uncertain woes fill in the existence and the poet feels ‘a god-less emptiness everywhere’, the familiar attachment with the existence and the

shattered. A modest accomplishment of negativity and disorder upholds the poet’s feeling:

*My words have worn wings
and fled away, leaving me
a quiver in a fog-white dawn,
Keeping me awake to the night
That crawls irredeemably
To my blood’s fables. (61-66)*

The adequate emotional equivalents turn in to magnificent obsession. The state is concerned with the incompatible certainty, infidelity and spiritual vacuum. It enters life through the sensible disorder and chaotic confinement.

In the fast growing global scenario a new generation of Indian poets in English comes up with a striking individuality of its own. As Iyenger points out:

It has sharpness in its features, an angularity in its gestures, a tone of defiance (or at least of nonconformity) in its speech, a gleam of hope in its eyes — a new ardour perhaps, and even new rhythms and Nuances and acerbates of speech (641)

Indian poetry in English recreates the modern out look with the sustenance of racial tradition, the treasure house of Indian myth and legend, the significant memories of our history. It is rightly observed :

Indo-Anglican poetry, like the rest of modern Indian poetry is Indian first and everything else afterwards. It has voiced the aspirations, the joys and sorrows of the Indian people. It has been sensitive to the changes in the national climate and striven increasingly to express the soul of India, the personality which distinguishes her from other nations. At the same time, its constant endeavour is to delineate the essential humanity and universality, which make the whole world her kith and kin (Gokak 45)

It is comfortable enough to bring Niranjana Mohanty into consideration to the modern Indian tradition of new poets. His creative impulses are reasonably tied with the peculiar perplexity of time, situation and mystic reality. He deals with the elusive

of human condition, human events in poetic experience keeping a new faith in transition. Indian motifs, responses, attitudes and trends have the marvelous elasticity and expressiveness in his mind and he admits the living Indian heritage and cultural sensibility in his optic voice. He reiterates the original vocation of life with proper intensity and strength of feeling, clarity in thought. He mingles his own private situations, which are rediscovered with the experiments of lapses of time and present loneliness. With such a clash he invents the concrete philosophy that remains in the camouflage of desired condition with the freshness of sensibility and vitality of intelligence. Very often his trained intelligence gets on out let through the confessional outspokenness. In a creative embrace Mohanty grabs a strange unity of experience and expression.

In the process of poetic expression depersonalization or submerging the personality of the artist is a significant phenomena of objectivity. The mind of a true poet is a finely perfected medium where the liberated feelings create new combinations. So the mind of the poet has been compared to a catalytic agent, is the shred of platinum that helps in the formation of sulphuric acid without being affected it. Eliot's theory of impersonalisation has a potent force on Niranjana Mohanty's poetic work. He deals with the poetic thought by intelligence. No true poet can escape tradition. In the deeper consciousness of the poet the past is involved in a greater extent and reproduced as an echo. The pressure of present also influences him, in the process of becoming he relates the immediate present to the living past. Niranjana Mohanty abides such principle for a better poetic progress. Eliot suggests that no man can write unless and until he has a proper historical sense which "compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones " but with a feeling that the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes simultaneous order (14) Mohanty is very much reactive to the present disillusionment and the cynic approach to life. Past is always beautiful that is why he looks back and broods over the past. All these profound reflections amount to Niranjana Mohanty's high sense of aestheticism.

On a close reading of Niranjana Mohanty's poetry one comes to a conclusion that "Indianness" in his verse rightly projects a complex interaction of psychological force. Indian English idiom comes out as a result of maintaining intimate relationship with history, tradition, and indigenous culture and with the proper interpretations of present. As Bruce King writes:

English is no longer the language of colonial rulers: it is a language of modern India in which words and expressions have recognized national rather than imported significances and references, alluding to local realities, traditions and ways of feeling (3)

Niranjana Mohanty keeps a concrete relationship with a language, which has been historically and psychologically attached to his environment. He is very much conscious to preserve the gentle thoughts that remain special in his memory. In a recent poem published in a journal, he affirms:

*Certain things, I'm sure
don't go away; or even if they go away;
or disappear or melt into anvils
of distances, they really don't go away.*

(Letting Go (!) 1-4)

Adaptation of such choice in creativity is not a matter of polemics rather it asserts the dialectics of identity and truth.

Not Shakespeare but Prof. Mohanty has rightly explained the irony of life in a practical demonstration. Still there was the pyramid of hope to be materialised, dreams to be dreamt, but the death of Prof. Mohanty explained - life is but a working shadow, a poor player, full of sound and fury but having no significance. Really he has explained the life which is full of irony, paradox, problems and injustice. The theme of life and loving has become a vital search for his craving zone. □

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POPULATION PROBLEM AS LEIT - MOTIF IN INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

* Dr. Prafulla Chandra Swain

According to Kai Nicholson, the Indian English novelists showed an amazing awareness of the political and social problems afflicting the post-Independence India⁽¹⁾. A sample scrutiny of the descriptions of and references to the population problem in the novels of leading writers corroborates this statement of the scholar- critic for the largest depiction of the population issue as found in R.K. Narayan's novel, 'The Painter of Signs' the story of which is set in Malgudi the locale of many a Narayan novels, where a family planning centre was opened in 1972 and an intense campaign was launched in the sub-urb to create awareness among the people about the needs of limiting population. As a part of the campaign, it was decided to paint the pictures of a family - a couple with two children with the message "We are two, let ours be two; limit your family" on the village walls. Daisy, who was in charge of the office at Malgudi, summoned the painter, Raman and went on a three weeks tour of the countryside to select the walls for such paintings. She explains her strategy to the painter thus:

We shall only select the spots now, later on you will come back and write the signs..... When the message has sunk into their minds I'll come again with a medical team, who'll do vasectomy and also fit up contraceptive devices.⁽²⁾

Daisy is well armed with statistics of the explosive population problem when she discusses family planning with the village school teacher.

Our quantum of population - increase every year is equal to the total population of a country like Peru, that's fourteen million.⁽³⁾

The alarming and abnormal increase in the population of the Nagari village which registered a thirty per cent growth in a year

and the over-crowding in Malgudi in the last five years have been cited as other evidences of the grave population problem faced by the country.

The pattern and pace of India's population growth has also been referred to by Bhabani Bhattacharya in his novel Shadow from Ladakh. Bhaskar Ray, the America trained young chief engineer of the Loharpur Steel Company, was aware of the rapid population growth and suggested increased production as the solution. As the novelist writes:

Each tick of the clock meant opportunity used or lost. Each five ticks - or it could be four - signed the birth of an Indian child. Sixteen hours More than twelve thousand babies born in that span of time between the Himalayas and the Cape. Had production risen over that period to meet the new born demand?⁽⁴⁾

A passing reference to the country's rising population and its causes has also been made in Khushwant Singh's novel Train to Pakistan by Iqbal, an educated city-dweller character:

What could you expect when population went up by six every minute - five millions every year! It made all plasuring in industry or agriculture a mockery. Why not spend the same amount of effort in checking the increase in population?⁽⁵⁾

Though the figures furnished in the novel do not fully correspond with actual population statistics. Iqbal's awareness of the dangers of overpopulation reflect the growing consciousness among the educated Indians.

The educated Indians concern for population control has also been alluded to by Kamala Markandaya in her novel Two Virgins through the character of Appa. When Manikam, the village milkman, approached him for a loan. Appa advised him to go to the family planning centre to stop further addition to his "umpteens babies". Manikam agreed but he was afraid of losing his virility

Season, Manohar Malgonkar describes how Abe, the American Peace Corps volunteer at the Varunapur village, taught family planning to the villagers and found at least three village women quite enthusiastic of it⁽⁷⁾. The Indian tribal population's transitional resentment against family planning has been depicted by Arun Joshi in the novel, The Strange Case of Billy Biswas. According to the story, a family planning clinic was opened in a tribal area. But the tribals resented its existence and burnt the clinic⁽⁸⁾. By putting together the references, descriptions, allusions, etc from these and many more Indian English novels not only a very accurate and authentic picture of the actual explosive population problem of India can be obtained, but also the contemporary and burning issue can be proved as a leit motif in the novels of the Indian Writings in English. □

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Humanistic Aspects in James Baldwin's Go Tell It on the Mountain

* Mrs. V. Malarkodi

The intellectual atmosphere of humanity is now rapidly changing and is becoming charged with new interests. More and more people, oppressed with the sole skepticism of the Post-War period, are beginning to become more skeptical. They are looking for a new set of controlling ideas capable of restoring and retaining values to human existence. Certain forces emerge out order and seek new objectives. One of these forces is known as humanism. In its broadest sense, it denotes a belief as Pope has succinctly observed in his *ESSAY ON MAN*:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan:

The proper study of mankind is man (1-2).

This study of humanistic aspects aims at enabling mankind to perceive and realize its humanity.

Humanism is a term that implies interest in man and his values. The word 'humanism' has been used to signify a concern for the mundane world, an interest, which has found expression in the desire to accomplish the good life here and now. Humanism is not a descriptive word but a prescriptive word. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines humanism as "devotion to human interest; system that is concerned with ethical standards (but not with religions), and with the study of mankind". It expresses a normative ideal, which is offered to guide and direct our conduct. It is not the description of what is the case but what ought to be the case. It shows how one ought to treat human beings, or interpret social institutions and what general model one ought to use for the future.

Humanism is a vital concern for man. Paul Oskar Kristeller states that humanism indicates a basic concern for man and his dignity. It suggests not a doctrine but an attitude. It is an organic attitude towards life and it has not been a sectarian battle cry, but a word connoting a concern for man and his earthly welfare. It

focuses on the general attitude of the human beings. It is an emphasis on the qualities it considers to be essentially humane. It is in defence of human dignity and of human possibilities. It is in opposition to all the forces that threaten them, whether these forces be religious, social, governmental, economic, or those of an anti-human philosophy. This attitude received its name during the Renaissance, when it was revived as a result of the study of Greek and Roman antiquity.

Humanism is the awakening of the individual to a sense of freedom. It expresses a worldly concern for human happiness and a just human society. It advocates a sensitive regard for each man as his own end and for man as responsible for man. This notion of human responsibility is the nucleus of humanism. It is a philosophy for those who are in love with life.

In modern times humanism has taken various forms, such as secular, religious, radical, literary, ethical and scientific. There are different kinds of humanists too. James Baldwin is a secular humanist when he puts faith in man rather than in God. He is an ethical humanist who enhances the areas of human freedom in the world and recognizes the existence of moral dilemmas and the need for moral decision-making. He is termed as a scientific humanist who supplants religion and makes scientific knowledge the instrument of freeing man and enhancing his life. He is a modern humanist who rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion, both secular and religious.

Baldwin's approach to the socio-economic and political problems is basically humanistic. The idea of Baldwin is that the dehumanizing oppression, brutality and treatment of the Blacks as second-class citizens can be rooted out through the practice of love. Baldwin realizes that love and compassion can restore peace and happiness in the war-torn world. His insistence on the dignity of man, irrespective of race, creed and wealth, his plea for the practice of love as a living value, his crusade against imperialism, are some of the chief characteristics of his humanism.

Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953) is James Baldwin's first masterpiece work which opens on the fourteenth birthday of John Grimes, in the Harlem tenement in which he lives with his parents, younger brother Roy and two younger sisters Sarah and Ruth.

It is an honest and intensive study of society and mankind as a whole. Quest for love ends in futility except for John. Using the fictional character John Grimes as a surrogate, Baldwin expresses his own frustrations, and the shortcomings of his family as a whole. The main goal of humanism is acceptance of one's self and each other to maintain good relationship and understanding. In *Go Tell It on the Mountain* there is no complete acceptance of one's self through loving commitment to another. This novel, which embodies social oppression of a minority group, is a passionate plea for love in personal relations. The author's preoccupation in this novel is essentially humane and spiritual. What gives this work a larger and a more lasting appeal is that it touches on issues of middle class existence, the powerful and concrete problems surrounding Black man's identity. Gabriel has no love for his bastard son John Grimes. John fails to get love and tenderness from his father despite attempts to please him. John encounters hatred that forces him to hate in return. Roy, who is the legitimate heir to the royal line, is unconvinced by his mother's attempted assurance of Gabriel's love. In the case of Florence, it is ironic that in the midst of her own pain and suffering, her sole reflections are those of inflicting anguish and distress upon others.

Florence's move from the rural South to the urban North is emblematic of the great migration of Negroes from South to North. It reflects the great migration of Negroes from Africa to America. This migration of Negroes are the most deliberate of their consciousness.

Carolyn Wedin Sylvanger points out in his *Modern Literature Series of James Baldwin*:

Florence's move to North is the most deliberate and conscious, and Florence also comes closest to adjusting without having to retain the umbilical cord of essentially Southern religious fundamental-

Florence suffers socially, economically, physically because of her colour and being a black female. George Kent points out in his essay "Baldwin and the Problem of Being":

Controlled by such an image, Florence founders in a mixture of self hatred, self righteousness, sadism, and guilt feelings. Married to a never-do well she succeeds merely in outraging herself and him and in driving him away. She bows to religious ecstasy. Baldwin's point of course, is that she was unable to achieve a life affirming love or her potential identity and that her ecstatic surrender to Christianity as she hears the end of life is a gesture of desperation. (19)

The artist as humanist is an artist who stands at the centre of the human experience and derives his strength from it. There is not only absence of one's self through loving commitment to another, but the characters find it difficult to identify with their community too. As a result one is not able to develop a healthy ability to commune with another. There is a desperate quest for love in almost all the characters.

Through this novel Baldwin proves that the loss of humanism is the key factor of the frustrated life. John Grimes both hates and fears God but he fears and hates his father with a greater intensity. His stepfather Gabriel, despite his pretensions to moral rectitude is basically incapable of loving any one because of his lust, shame and guilt. John Grime's fear and hatred of God cannot ultimately be distinguished from his fear and hatred of society. Fear, oppression and failure of love are the three factors around which John Grime's predicaments revolve. His theological terror, his fear and hatred of God is analogous to his fear and hatred of the White society. Baldwin approaches the very essence of Blackman's experience. The idea that the Heavenly Father does not reject the Black man utterly is beneath the surface of John's conversion.

The second part of the novel is a moving record of a man's struggle to define the forces that have shaped him. It deals

father. She falls in love with Richard and follows him North to Harlem.

In those days had the Lord Himself descended from Heaven with trumpeted telling her to turn back; she could scarcely have heard Him and could certainly not have headed. She lived in those days, in a fiery storm, of which Richard was the centre and the heart. And she fought only to reach him: (161)

Richard dies by his own hand because society would not allow him to live. He dies in desperation, not being able to succeed in a White world that only wants his destruction. The death of Richard serves as an illustration for the failure of love in a racist society. If love is in part the willingness to accept the validity of another's life, so is racism the denial of another's humanity. The policemen who arrest Richard deride Elizabeth's love for Richard. Richard's arrest and suicide point to racial injustice in social dimensions. Following the jailing of her lover Richard, Elizabeth looks out into the sunny streets "- - - and for the first time in her life, - she hated it all - the white city, the white world. She could not that day think of one decent white person in the whole world (225)." It is evident that Baldwin derides and derogates the White society's dominance over the Black society's existence. Baldwin presents racial problem as a human problem of injustice of man to man. Though the novel is about Christian experience and Christian values, the moral is more secular though it is expressed in Christian idiom. It does not reflect the traditional treatment of Christianity in African-American Literature but examines the enigmas of human affections absent in Christians.

John's emotions and attitude towards his father are a mixture of love and hate which are common. Gabriel kept his promise to provide the boy with his physical and spiritual need but he is never able to offer the sensitive child the love that is so vital to his being. To John there are two Gabriels,⁽¹⁾ Gabriel the super ego,

whom he wants to love and from whom he wants to win love; and ⁽²⁾Gabriel the man whom he abominates. Baldwin does make it clear that one hates precisely because one cannot love

father and his desire to hate him. John has seen in his countenance a cruel, vindictive hatred, directed towards him. John never suspects that his father (Gabriel) is not his real father.

Gabriel's prayer reveals the tremendous pull of lust and guilt that drives him first to Deborah, then to Esther and finally to Elizabeth. Deborah becomes sterile following a rape committed by Whites at the age of sixteen. Gabriel's affair with Esther lasts only nine nights. After Deborah's death he marries Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Richard both are seen as joyful figures capable of love. Richard strives to achieve an intellectual quality with the Whiteman. He is determined as he tells Elizabeth "I was going to get to know everything the white bastards know and I was going to get to know it better than them" (167).

Richard is unjustly arrested by the police for robbing a grocery store. He is thrown into jail, savagely beaten, and abused beyond the endurance of his fragile intellect. Richard dies by his own hand all too soon because society would not allow him to live.

The central theme of the novel is the need to accept reality as a necessary foundation for individual identity. This is an urgent formula not only for the redemption of individual men but also for the survival of mankind. In the strange and fatal conflict between the ideal and reality, Baldwin seems to say that our humanity is our burden and we have to accept.

John in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is given to self-awareness and ascends towards self-affirmation that is deeper and more explicit. His ordeal spiritual rebirth takes place in the temple of 'fire baptized'. There is an evidence for his conversion in the church of his salvation. Turning to Gabriel, John smiles but receives no smile in return from his step-father. John knows that he has not won Gabriel's love. Then John hears his mother calling him and answers "I'm on my way" (291). Baldwin seems to say that the 'way' is the way towards progress and redemption, as he says to Elisha "remember-please remember-I was saved. I was there" (290). John Grimes goes through a harrowing experience in an attempt to reconcile inner conflicts. The idea of viewing man as the centre of universe and as an entity capable of improvement

which is genuinely shared by all humanists. Baldwin believes that man is the master of destiny and man is the centre of all things.

Freedom, which is an important feature of humanism, finds a prominent place in the novel. Elizabeth has achieved a loving spiritual force that is reflected in her selfless devotion to her family. This theology of hate, fear and guilt of man's basic correction before an omnipotent God mutilates the attempted love relationships of those who try of function within it. (378)

Elizabeth seeks freedom from her aunt just as John seeks freedom from Gabriel and Florence seeks freedom from her mother. All three are drawn as victims. Florence is victimized by her mother's preference for Gabriel, John is victimized by his father's preference for Roy and hatred for him and Elizabeth is victimized by her aunt's hatred of her father. John discovers the beginnings of brotherly love in Elisha.

John's father does not touch him or kiss him or smile at him. John is rejected by his father and cursed with his blackness and so black men in a White society are made to feel degraded by their own blackness and rejected by their own fathers. Baldwin makes the relationship between John and Gabriel typify the situation of all black men who are punished by a hostile White society.

The crowning point of the novel undoubtedly is John Grimes' mystical experience, on his fourteenth birthday. The belief that the father may not want to recognize his bastard birth, but God will recognize His own, has sustained John after he accepts his heritage. Baldwin sees the Negro quite literally as the bastard child of American civilization. Baldwin approaches the very essence of Negro experience. The idea that the Heavenly Father does not reject the Negro utterly is beneath the surface of John's conversion.

In the tenets of Baldwin's humanism the following salient features can be considered:

- # Belief in the brotherhood of men is a great virtue, which need

- # All people must be treated with dignity.
- # Man is the master of his destiny and he is the measure of everything.
- # Humanism is a powerful agent to root out inhuman activities. It has a redemptive and reconciliatory power.
- # It is the responsibility of the state and the government, and the mankind as well, to promote humanism.

Baldwin's humanism has an inexhaustible sense of sympathy and a deep-seated love for the oppressed. Universal brotherhood and restoration of fundamental human values are the basic concerns of the writer. Such a vision emanates from human suffering and poverty stricken-life. Baldwin's fiction seems to point out the validity of effort to achieve a genuine sense of self only through one's identification with humanity. His novels thus contribute a magnificent assertion of the oneness of the human spirit that unites the family of mankind. On the whole, his works imply in them a message, the message of love. □

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Form and Theme of Gwendolyn Brooks's Sonnets

* Dr.K.Muthuraman

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Gwendolyn Brooks is the first African-American poet to win the coveted Pulitzer Prize for second volume of poetry, Annie Allen, published in 1949. She has exploited a number of poetic forms. She committed herself not only to the ideal of social justice for her race and sex, but also to the aesthetics of art. Her poetry is rich not only in ideas, but also in craftsmanship.

Brooks has written many sonnets. The sonnet form appeals to her for several reasons. She is attracted by the brevity, lyrical quality, sense of intimacy, and flexibility of the sonnet form. As a student of poetry, she has learnt and studied the ways in which Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Donne, Keats, and Wordsworth conveyed their intense emotions through the sonnet form. She also knows how to bend, not to break, the sonnet form to communicate her complex emotion.

Brooks's first published sonnets are found in A Street in Bronzeville. The series of twelve sonnets entitled "Gay Chaps at the Bar" are about World War II black soldiers. The prejudices and practices against them form the background of these sonnets. Brooks describes the making of these sonnets in her autobiographical work Report From Part One:

I first wrote the one sonnet, without thinking of extensions. I wrote it because of a letter I got from a soldier who included that phrase (the title of the series of twelve sonnets and of the first sonnet) in what he was telling me; and then I said, there are other things to say about what's going on at the front and all, and I'll write more poems, some of them based on the stuff of letters that I was getting from several soldiers, and I felt it would be good to have them all in the same form, because it would serve my purposes throughout. (156)

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All the twelve sonnets are written in off-rhyme. Brooks justifies her use of off-rhyme: "A sonnet series in off-rhyme, because I felt it was an off-rhyme situation-I did think of that" (156). Of the twelve sonnets, the seventh one "the white troops had their order but the Negroes looked like men" is Petrarchan in rhyme scheme: abba abba cde ced. But Brooks uses only the slant rhyme, because it is about an off-rhyme situation – "disfavour of the darkness" by the whites:

*They had supposed their formula was fixed.
 They had obeyed instructions to devise
 A type of cold, a type of hooded gaze.
 But when the Negroes came they were perplexed.
 These Negroes looked like men. Besides, it taxed
 Time and the temper to remember those
 Congenital iniquities that cause
 Disfavour of the darkness. Such as boxed
 Their feelings properly, complete to tags-
 A box for dark men and a box for other-
 Would often find the content had been scrambled.
 Or even switched. Who really gave two figs?
 Neither the earth nor heaven even trembled.
 And there was nothing startling in the weather. (1-14)*

The third, fourth, and fifth sonnets are Shakespearean. The Shakespearean is rhymed as three quatrains and a couplet: abab cdcd efed gg:

*On a sung evening I shall watch her fingers,
 Cleverly ringed, declining to clever pink,
 Beg glory from the willing keys. Old hungers
 Will break their coffins, rise to eat and thank.
 And music, warily, like the golden rose
 That sometimes after sunset warms the west,
 Will warm the room persuasively suffuse
 That room and me, rejuvenate a past.
 But suddenly, across my climbing fever
 Of proud delight-a multiplying cry.
 Attend a gentle maker of musical joy.*

Than my thawed eye will go again to ice.

And stone will share the softness from my face. (1-14)

The rhyme scheme of the other sonnets are either varying Petrarchan or Shakespearean—Petrarchan in which the first two quatrains are Shakespearean and the latter sestet is Petrarchan: abab cdcd efg efg.

The black soldiers, when they encountered the hostile and inhuman treatment of the American Armed Forces in World War II, felt the necessity to assert their humanity and undaunted spirit, which are in no way inferior to that of the White Americans. Hence, Brooks makes the first sonnet "gay chaps at the bar" masculine and martial in tone: "We knew how to order. Just the dash / Necessary. The length of gaiety in good taste" (1-2). The young men described in the sonnet are more than soldiers. They are confident. They know how to be men for all occasions, and know well the language appropriate to the occasion. They can give orders, tell stories, and talk smoothly to women: "And we knew beautifully how to give to women/The summer spread, the tropics of our love./When to persist, or hold a hunger off"(5-7).

The images in the sonnet express the mental maturity of the soldiers, who are very much involved in their armed life. Brooks begins the sonnet with the aural image, "order," and moves her description with other images such as "raillery," "white speech," "athletic language," and "chat." These images do not merely imply rule or command alone, but expose the methodical, meticulous, and authoritative behaviour of the soldiers. Since all the strategies of the gay chaps are meticulously designed, their "raillery," "white speech," and "athletic language" give a sequential meaning to their consciously developed social movement. Though the literal sense of "raillery" refers to a good humoured ridicule, the poet, insists not on the mode of the language the soldiers use, but their mode of approach to life outside the battlefield. With "raillery," which is cold and sensible, the poet tries to identify the unusually less serious, good humoured, and nonchalant behaviour of the soldiers, who spend most of their time in planning and executing

The gay chaps show interest for “white speech” which helps them to cross the barriers to be part of the main stream. The poet’s tone is ironical as the image denotes the black people’s dream for a generally accepted communicative device, developed by the whites, with sophistication, beauty, and pride. Having learnt the white speech, the soldiers switch over to “athletic language,” which shows how the soldiers maintain their image as heroes. The images “brass fortissimo” and “holler” explain the evolution of soldiers from a derisive state to a heroic state. The aural image “chat” denotes the escape mechanism of the soldiers. They contemplate on their own intelligence in order to avoid their fear of death, which awaits the right moment to victimize them.

The second sonnet “**still do I keep my look, my identity**” contemplates on death. Death reduces all human being to dust. Though human beings are mortals, they are unique during their life. The first eight lines develop the idea of the uniqueness of living beings:

*Each body has its art, its precious prescribed
Pose, that even in passion’s droll contortions, waltzes
Or push of pain-or when a grief has stabbed,
Or hatred hacked-is its, and nothing else’s.
Everybody has its pose. No other stock
That is irrevocable, perpetual
And its to keep. In castle or in shack.*

With rags or robes. Through good, nothing, or ill. (1-8)

The young soldiers have lived intensely, and deny that they have barely lied, though they sense the imminence of their death. They remember moments of physical passion, of grief, and of hatred. Brooks’s success depends on her ability to make the readers participate in the soldier’s emotional involvement. The first eight lines of the poem develop the image of “pose” in the readers’s mind. The image, with its artistic gesture, reminds how every human impulse is reflected in the physical pose. “Droll contortions” and “waltzes” create a visual picture of the distinctive physical pose in the minds of the readers.

The soldiers insist on their own uniqueness after death as in life. Lines nine through fourteen present contrasts:

*And even in death a body, like no other
On any hill or plain or crawling cot
Or gentle for the lilyless hasty pall
(Having twisted, gagged, and then sweet-ceased to bother),
Shows the old personal art, the look. Shows that
It showed at baseball. What it showed in school. (9-14)*

The parallels to the words “passion,” “grief,” and “hatred” and the beginning of the sonnet appear in the sestet of the sonnet: “hill,” “plain,” and “cot” places where persons in war fall down dead or laid to death.

Another significant contrast in the sonnet is between art/pose of the body in death and art/pose of the soldiers in youth. Dead bodies sprawl awkwardly often in positions no living being can assume. These “postures” are not willed “personal art.” There is nothing in them of the studied choreography of persons at sport or of the multiple attitudes of children caught in various school poses. Contrasts and ironies are at the heart of Brooks’s creation of the uniqueness of the soldiers after death as in life.

“My dreams, my works, must wait till after hell” is one of the simplest sonnets in the series. In a plain and homely fashion the soldier describes his effort to keep his spirit undefiled by war. Gladys Margaret Williams’s observation on the language, imagery, and structure of this sonnet enables the readers to see the harmonious relationship between form and content:

*Simplicity and even an old-fashioned quality of language,
of sentence structure, an of imagery and most appropriate for one
who desires to husband his innermost self. Tightly parallel constructions and very neatly repeated stress patterns in the octave emphasize the persona’s economy of effort in holding on to and in deferring his real life until “after hell.”(227)*

Brooks uses short words throughout the sonnet “my dreams, my works, must wait till after hell.” Most of them are monosyllabic. The last word of every line is accented. She controls the sound effects to communicate the soldier’s longing for the end of hell. The predominance of liquid and nasal sounds combine to move syllables along easily. All these characteristics contribute to the creation of the desperate hope expressed throughout the sonnet:

*I hold my honey and store my bread
In little jars and cabinets of my will.
I label clearly, and each latch and lid
I bid, be firm till I return from hell.
I am very hungry. I am incomplete.
And none can tell when I may dine again.
No man can give me any word but wait,
The puny light. I keep eyes pointed in;
Hoping that, when the devil days of my hurt
Drag out to their last dregs and I resume
On such legs as are left me, in such heart
As I can manage, remember to go home,
My taste will not have turned insensitive
To honey and bread old purity cold love. (1-14)*

The sonnet records the sense of hopelessness prevailing among the black soldiers in the army. “Honey” and “bread” express his longing for life. “Hell” speaks about the distressing nature of war. The visual image “devil days” connotes the morbid fear and the bewilderment of the soldiers at the thought of involving themselves in the war. The soldiers reveal their desire to return to their earliest state of life in which they will be sensible, and have a taste for “honey” and “bread.” The war has made them “incomplete.” Hence, they are “very happy” to return to the earlier state of their life. But they are uncertain about the end of war and their return to their “home.”

Though the sonnet form imposes several restrictions on the creator, Brooks has obtained a balance between the depth of emotion and the rigidity of form. She has not strictly adhered to the established models; she has not hesitated to bend the form to achieve the desired effect; and she has not sacrificed the content for the form. The sonnet is simply a framework, a conven-

that a poetic convention is what one makes of it. As Gladys Margaret Williams says, Brooks’s success stems “from the skill he demonstrates in characterizing the personae, at once sardonic, solemn, ironic, volatile, and pensive”(229). The result is that Brooks has created several fine sonnets.

Brooks’s second sonnet series appeared in her Pulitzer Prize winning volume Annie Allen. “The Children of the Poor” consists of five sonnets, which address the mother’s question of socio-economic injustice. In these five sonnets, Brooks manipulates form to underscore her theme. In each sonnet, she uses a mixture of both Petrarchan and Shakespearean forms: the Octave conforms to the Petrarchan rhyme pattern, abba and abba; the sestet offers a complex variation on the Shakespearean rhyme pattern, ef ef and gg. She uses multiple couplets in the sestet, especially in the first three sonnets. They thwart the expected resolution of the sonnet’s dilemmas, but heighten the sense of mother’s frustration and her inability to provide a meaningful answer to her children:

*While through a throttling dark we others hear
The little lifting helplessness, the queer
Whimper-whine; whose unridiculous
Lost softness softly makes a trap for us
And makes a curse. And makes a sugar of
The malocclusions, the inconditions of love. (9-14)*

These last six lines of the sonnet describe the helplessness of parents and children. Further, parental love cannot solve the problem unless society is cured of its sociological and economic ills. Hence, the mother’s love is inadequate.

In the second sonnet, Brooks makes use of ingenious and incongruent figures of speech. The mother compares her children with lepers; she further compares them with “contraband”; in the last quatrain, she employs the mythological conceit of the alchemist’s stone. Like Donne, Brooks employs heterogeneous metaphors to reveal the complex social problems of poverty.

In the third sonnet, Brooks uses colloquial and literary poetic diction to dramatize the psychological problems of love and poverty:

And shall I prime my children, pray, to pray?

*Spectered with crusts of penitents' renewals
And all hysterics arrogant for a day.
Instruct yourselves here is no devil to pay.
Children, confine your lights in jellied rules;
Resemble graves; be metaphysical mules;
Learn Lord will not distort nor leave the fray. (1-8)*

The word "prime" is an elliptical expression that implies teaching at the primary level. In the second line, the image "mites" is both a reference to the insect and a diminutive qualifier for "children" as well as ingenious reference to the small boxes used for special Sunday school offerings. These connotations coalesce in the phrase, "invade most frugal vestibules", the nearby anteroom of the church where the children have come to pray. In the third line, "spectered" connotes the mysterious nature of Christian mythology, while "crusts of penitents' renewals" suggests the bits of the sacramental wafer as well as the domestic image of a nearly empty food closet. The image "all hysterics" in the fourth line connotes emotional catharsis that accompanies the children's worship. Brooks's choice of these words in the first quatrain is literary.

In the second quatrain, Brooks uses colloquial words. The mother sarcastically admonishes her children, "instruct yourselves here is no devil to pay" and "confine your lights in jellied rules." The image "light" signifies both religious enlightenment and self-knowledge. Ironically, the mother instructs her children to confine their religious training. However, this spiritual food does not respond to the basic need of the poor children for nourishment. Without food, the children will "resemble graves." She encourages her children to accept religion's meager offerings. The last two lines suggest that she will apply a "bandage" on their eyes to conceal their spiritual impoverishment.

The poetic diction of the fourth sonnet is forceful. It is not encumbered by allusive figures of speech. Its perspective omits the dichotomies that characterize the mother's ambivalence in the preceding sonnets. Its tone is assertive. The mother's commitment to the life-struggles of the children is conveyed by the sonnet's form and imagery. The octave argues that music-making and the discipline it involves have certain socio-physiological

the slipping string," "muzzle the note," "Qualify to sing," and "Devote the bow to silks and honey." However, the sestet defiantly argues that militant action is necessary "to civilize a space/Wherein to play your violin with grace" (13-14).

The fifth sonnet, like the first three sonnets, is elegiac in tone. The mother's commitment to socio-economic justice for her children continues to be firm in this sonnet. In the octave, the euphemism, "dearsdie," replaces the earlier oxymoron, "sweetest lepers." Further, death itself becomes another euphemism, "crisp encounter." The sestet describes that poverty, that characterizes the children's lives, has prepared them to accept death as a natural consequence of living. The last three lines suggest that death will actually begin life, because its "universality" will provide answers that have eluded the mother. Death is universal, which ignores matters of race and class:

*I say they may, so granitely discreet,
The little crooked questionings inbound,
Concede themselves on most familiar ground,
Could an old predicament of the breath:
Adroit, the shapely prefaces complete,
Accept the university of death. (9-14)*

The five sonnets entitled "The Children of the Poor" demonstrate Brooks's success in writing poetry that is both socially conscious and intricately crafted. Her sonnets are characterized by variety, complexity, and indirection. She does not make specific mention of race as a social issue; rather it is implied. She vacillates between overt militancy and painful introspection. □

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ERICA JONG'S FANNY : A NOTE

* Dr. Amiya Kumar Patra

Erica Jong's second novel *Fanny: Being The True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout Jones* (1980) is a post-modern revision of an eighteenth century picaresque text by one Mr. John Cleland. In its 495 pages of narrative *Fanny* subverts the putative gender roles corroborating Kate Millett's view that "Gender is a term that has psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female', the corresponding terms for gender are 'masculine' and 'feminine', these latter may be quite independent of (biological) sex. Indeed so arbitrary is gender that it may even be contrary to physiology" (1970 : 30). Indeed, the narrator in this novel steers clear of binary opposites to create a ludic space where gender roles overlap and, though a definite feminist agenda is not mooted, eventually patriarchal coding are subverted.

Erica Jong or rather Jong's Fanny faithfully carries out H. Cixous' imperative: "If woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man ... it is time for her to dislocate that 'within' to explode it; to make it her, containing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of" (1980 : 257). At the outset Jong introduces Fanny, the young heroine of the novel, to the readers as the 'author' "attempting" the symbolic pen to record her memoirs (3) and in the process to penetrate the 'within'. This exercise of attempting the pen by a woman could be viewed in the light of Gilbert and Gubar's question which opens their seminal study on woman writer: "Is pen a metaphorical penis?" (1979 : 3)

Writing is historically coded as a masculine act. It has been presumed that a man can only be the author as only he can be the father, the begetter. Writing, so it may be inferred, is tantamount to a sexual act where the phallic pen works upon the 'pure space' of the virgin page. In patriarchal (read Western) culture pen has been defined not just accidentally but essentially

'tool' and hence not only inappropriate but alien to woman. Woman, therefore, is apt to be imprisoned in male texts as the properties and characters of man - generated solely by male expectations and designs. By taking up the pen Fanny thwarts the fixity of gender roles and dismantles the masculine stereotypes. To the patriarchy the pen in Fanny's hand may appear to be presumptuous and unnatural, nonetheless, like the "ivory object shaped like a Masculine Member" in Madam Coxart's place (171), it does stand up to its calling. The so called masculine tool in Fanny's hand not only defuses male designs, it also refutes male texts. To put it in Jameson's phraseology, *Fanny* is a meta-book that cannibalizes other books; a meta-text that collate bits of other texts (1967:222). Although Fanny claims that her book intends to falsify John Cleland's "loathsome Book", *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, it indeed falsifies all texts of male hegemony. But, though Jong challenges phalocentricity, there is no design on her part to create a gynocentric text. The ludic narrative of Fanny breaks gender stereotypes and offer an alternative discourse which can hardly be called feminist although surely feminine.

Mr. Pope, as we see him in Fanny's chamber, has surely excluded the fair sex from his 'proper study of Mankind'. To Fanny's query, "Is it vain for a woman to wish to be a poet ...?" Mr. Pope answers with an unkind laughter: "Fanny, my Dear, the answer is implied in the query itself. Men are Poets: Women are meant to be their Muses upon Earth. You are the Inspiration of the poems, not the Creator of poems, and why should you wish it otherwise?"(41). The great poet also has his Nature's Great Plan / Order where women are placed below men and above children and dogs etc. But we see the Great Order and the poet's claim to the Creator are all in disarray when he fails to penetrate his muse and groans in disappointment at the premature expiry of his "Hot fit of Lust". Mr. Pope's Nature's Great Order, which is only a male construct, is further proved wrong in the novel when Lord Bellars, the foster father, also the natural father, as revealed at the close of the book, of Fanny seduces and rapes her. Man is thus brought down the ladder and placed below women and children, - only a

(?) beasts - perhaps he is made the king of beasts to signify bloody cruelty. Further, Swift's (another masculine sign post) beasts are employed signifiers to place men as well as women possessed by lust even lower than beasts in the Order. The dichotomy between the gender roles is finally disrupted when woman is made the subject rather than the object of desire. The myth of sexual passivity of women is put to an end with the play of feminine sexuality which may take the upper hand. The gender 'signs' in **Fanny** almost never reach their referents. The love-hate relationship between Lancelot and Black Horatio, and between both these men and Fanny frees 'gender' from any arbitrary role assignment. Whereas Fanny in her male attire plays man and seduces Molly, the maid servant, Mr. Cleland who claims to require a "fresh Maidenhead a Day to keep his spirits up (as Vampires require Blood)..." really enjoys sex only when dressed as woman and lying under. Fanny testifies: "playing the Wench seem'd to give him the confidence he lackt in his proper gender (read sex)..." (230).

In **Fanny** main stream gender roles are taken to task and abandoned with playful glee. The novel testifies that women experience not only the bliss of motherhood which no man ever can; they also kill which is so characteristic of man. Fanny is an accomplished member of the pirate band, a fine 'sea man' and a master in sword-man-ship who chops heads with least hesitation. Likewise the Witches in the novel are not only wise women who can heal as well as kill, they are also good mothers who prepare appetizing dishes in the kitchen. Thus **Fanny** is a feminine revision of man's representation of the other. In taking up the pen, the 'masculine tool', Fanny rewrites / revises woman's (also necessarily man's) history. By establishing herself as a woman of letters Fanny puts up a challenge to the phallic and ovarian theories of art (1). Such self (re)inscription on the part of Fanny underlines the fact, in opposition to the myth of 'O' or the decapitated mermaid (2) that she has a story to tell and a right to shape her own life. She playfully walks out of the "cramped confines of patriarchal space" (3) both by surpassing Huck Finn and Tom Jones and by living the life of a daughter and a mother.

As pointed out at the outset, **Fanny** is not a gynocentric text although there are enough evidences to register such a claim. There are chinks in the solid armor of this feminine text to let a "difference" creep in and subvert the entire text from within. Lord Bellars' Will is amended so that the tenancy of Lymeworth could be inherited by Bellinda's first born daughter after Bellinda. Fanny does not legally marry Lancelot for the fear of losing title to and power over her land and houses, stock and bonds though he enjoys them as much. These could be read as actions to spite the law which is patriarchal in its orientation. Instead, Lancelot's indifference at or rather scorn for the law in taking Fanny's side revises such a reading to point out the anti-individual essence of Law. Fanny who would not marry Lancelot for retaining, among other greater assets, as little as her maiden name, does not give a second thought before consenting to Lancelot's proposal to rename Lymeworth as Merriman Park while Isobel does protest and wishes the name to be Merriwych Park (490). The space between Merrimen and Merriwych is ludic in the sense that it not only erases any binary opposition but by letting the loose ends dangle in any possible direction implies that the real polemics is not over sex or gender but the ossification of meaning attached to them. □

NOTES

(i) See Elaine Showalter. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", Critical Inquiry, 8:2 (1981).

"Victorian physicians believed that women's physiological functions diverted about twenty per cent of their creative energy from brain activity. Victorian anthropologists believed that the frontal lobes of the male brain were heavier and more developed than female lobes and thus that women were inferior in intelligence". 187.

(ii) I owe the image of the decapitated Mermaid and the meaning which is intended here to a news item in **The Indian Express**, 10 Jan. 1998,:

Copenhagen, Jan. 10: Danish police are hunting a feminist

Little Mermaid statue on the Copenhagen waterfront. In a fax message received by police a group calling itself the Radical Feminist Faction said it carried out the action “to create a symbol of the sexually-fixated and misogynist male dream of women as being bodies without heads”. The Little Mermaid is Denmark’s national symbol.

(iii) See Mari McCarthy. “Possessing Female Space: ‘The Tender Shoot’”, **Women’s Studies**, 8 (1981) 368.

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MATRIARCHAL AND MYTHICAL HEALING IN GLORIA NAYLOR’S MAMA DAY

* Dr. (Mrs) V. Kundhavi

In the modern world, humanity lies fractured in varied aspects. The discrimination in wealth, race and colour has given rise only to a history of oppression. These oppressions have produced psychic wounds like slavery, genocide, gender oppressions etc. The contemporary black women writers have attempted and succeeded in their efforts to satisfy the needs of the black psyche through their literatures. During the last thirty years of the twentieth century, these writers have written to such an extent that critics like Joanne Braxton labelled the contemporary period as “Contemporary literary renaissance”⁽⁴⁾. These writers have explored the concept of healing through different matrices.

Healing in literature is multi-faceted. In the process of writing, the writer’s soul undergoes a healing process. For example, Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote In Memorium to compensate for the loss of his dearest friend - Arthur Henry Hallam. Diana Shulman, a practicing therapist, asserts that “Problems extend you with pain, while stories allow for possibilities”⁽⁷⁾. The black women writers have represented the victimized female black race in their writings. They have analyzed the origin and dimensions of their race and have opened up new paths of healing not only to their present generation but also for the future too. As Pryse observes, *Black women novelists have become literary conjure*

women ... who make it possible for their readers and each other to recognize their common literary ancestors - gardeners, quilt makers, grandmothers, root workers and women who wrote autobiographies... Black women, writers have enlarged our assumption about the nation and function of literary tradition⁽⁵⁾.

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From Zora Neale Hurston, Ntozake Shange to Gloria Naylor, the African-American women writers have made use of their creative energies to produce texts which have served both for the spiritual survival and empowerment of women of the African Diaspora.

This is the tradition in which Gloria Naylor - the African American novelist has placed herself. Each of Naylor's quartet novels pronounces a voice representing some part of the black community. The four novels: The Women of Brewster Place (1982), Linden Hills (1985) Mama Day (1988), and Bailey's Cafe (1992) have proved to suffice Naylor's feminist mandate to end violence against women. Almost all her women characters have served as role models in conceptualizing how women can exercise their great capacities for thinking, feeling and acting in ways that promote wholeness through healing both in themselves and in others.

Gloria Naylor takes up a new literacy matrix of conjuring for her third novel - Mama Day (1988). To retain an African American female identity which has been historically decentered, Naylor presents a black women centered community in Mama Day. The matriarchal network is designed not to heal just a family as in her second novel Linden Hills, but is woven to prove the feminist vision of liberation and social empowerment. The liberation in this novel is spiritual and culture bound. To link the cultural past for advocating the mental, physical and spiritual empowerment of her African - American Diasporic women, Naylor uses the art of conjuring in Mama Day.

According to Lindsey Tucker, there are three kinds of illnesses treated by conjuring:

- *Illness for which knowledge of roots, herbs, barks and teas is applied.*
- *Occult or spiritually corrected illness that requires spell casting and charms.*
- *Illness that includes both personal and collective calamities that are not the result of malevolent attitudes* (14)

Springs off the coast of South Carolina in Georgia. Sapphira Wade, the legendary mother is depicted by Naylor as:

WILLOW SPRINGS. Everybody knows but no body talks about the legend of Sapphira Wade. A true conjure woman: satin black, biscuit cream, red as Georgia clay: depending upon which of us takes a mind to her. She would walk through a lightning storm without being touched; grab a both of lightning in the palm of her hand.... She twisted the moon into salve, the stars into a swaddling cloth, and healed the wounds of every creature walking up on two or down or four (3).

Sapphira Wade, the legendary mother is a slave woman, who brought a whole new era to the island of Willow Springs. Being bought as a slave by a Norwegian named Bascombe Wade, who later married her, she bore him seven sons to persons known or unknown to her but forced by him. Later Sapphira compelled him to deed the island of Willow Springs to a thousand days and murdered him in the year 1823. This act of murder for her islanders has elevated her to a Mother goddess. In the island of Willow Springs patriarchy gets displaced with matriarchy.

With this legendary tale as its background the novel finds its description through three voices: the voice of George (from the grave), Cocoa's voice and in the voice of an omniscient narrator. The novel explores the tragic past of Mama Day. This surrogate Grandmother - Sapphira functions as a physical and spiritual healer, a preserver and as the wise woman of the small community of Willow Springs. It is these female protagonists who have served as conjurers and spiritual healers in Mama Day. They have bridged the gap of ancestral conjuring with African roots and the spiritual milieu of their forefathers thereby creating a healing narrative which Pryse terms them as "metaphorical conjure women" (5).

Of the three daughters born to the seventh son of the legendary matriarch Sapphira Wade, Abigail and Mama Day are the two to survive. Abigail had three daughters - Grace, Hope

Nedeed of Linden Hills died shortly after Willa got married to Luther. As Willa had burnt herself to death, the only heir left to was Cocoa, the sole legendary heir to Sapphira Wade.

It is Mama Day and Abigail, who nurture Cocoa alias 'Baby Girl', who later leaves Willow Springs for urban life in New York. In New York, she falls in love with an engineer George, and later marries him. It is during their visit to Willow Springs they encounter the supernatural forces of nature. George sacrifices his life while attempting to save his wife Cocoa, who is later saved by the matriarchal powers of Mama Day.

Naylor's depiction of George Andrews, one of the three voices, is an engineer from Columbia university. He is an orphan, who has received the imprsonal guidance of Mrs. Jackson of the Wallace T. Andrews shelter for Boys. He is on the notion that "Only the present is potential" (23). His association with Cocoa gradually turns his pragmatic approach to life.

When George crosses the mainland and enters the island, he attains a consciousness as of entering another world. As George is unable to acknowledge the powers of matriarchy, the central conflict arises. David Cowart asserts, "the single great source of disharmony, which Naylor intimates, lies in an overturning, enduring ego of matriarchal authority and its divine counterpart. The world still reels for the displacement of the Goddess - the Great Mother" (444). Though he observes the gifted hands of Mama Day in helping the infertile couple Bernice and Ambush and her magical powers of delivering most of the babies of Willow Springs, he dismisses her powers and remarks casually, natural remedies are really in now. We have centers opening up all over the place in New York (195). These comments of George reveal his "ignorance of the effectiveness of holistic healings" (Page 47). He calls Mama Day's healing strategy as "mumbo jumbo" (134).

When Cocoa becomes the victim of the spell magician Ruby, it is George who makes an attempt to the chicken cop. He returns with empty hands after smashing the chicken cop and later dies of heart attack. The faith in the ancestral past helps Cocoa

relive her life but it takes away the life of the George, as his consciousness was not bound on faith.

The healing powers of Mama Day continue to heal not only Cocoa but also the islanders. As a whole Mama Day carries the healing powers from her ancestors as gifts. She has a second sight through which she sees magic in the woods on the island. Everyday this "Mother" makes her visit to the trees and flowers and hears their whispers. Naylor picturizes the healing powers prevalent in nature and the wisdom of Mama Day as:

She tells him what part of that forest she uses in the fall, summer or spring. Differences in leaves of trees, barks of trees, roots. The tonics she makes up, the poultices, the healing teas.... About the drying, layering, measuring and watching. (207).

This great mother did not possess just the powers of healing and conjuring. She could read the signs of animal behaviour too and tell the advent of hurricane even before the weather forecasters: "You better listen to the crows, Miranda says, when it gets so they start screaming, the winds gone come in screaming too" (236).

Mama Day serves not only as a healer, predictor and a conjurer. She is a counsellor too. She is the guardian angel to the islands of Willow Spring. When people get dejected to their personal problems, they seek their shelter in her house. When Frances, the old wife of Jounior Lee falls a prey to the conjurer Ruby, she seeks the advice of Mama Day for which this mother utters: "A man doesn't leave you less he wants to go Frances. And if he's made up his mind to go, these ain't nothing you, me, or anybody else can do about that" (93).

These unusual matriarchal powers of Mama Day owe their heritage to the legacy of her ancestors. She shares the ancestral gifts and wisdom with her descendants to keep the past alive. The "Candle Walk" ritual on December 22 marking the winter solstice and the "Standing forth" ceremony honouring the dead - all these reveal the matriarchal myth in which the islanders linked their

The role of the matriarchal mother has been established by African American women writers. Valerie Lee, in Granny Midwives and Black Women Writers: Double Dutched Readings (1996) brings a connection between Conjure, historical grannies and their literary representations. These grannies played the role of midwives, birth attendants. These women played multiple roles as midwife, herbalist and traditional healers. Lee asserts that, "the literary granny is a character with an eclectic profession and electric presence"(9). The role of the Old Wife - Minnie and Sophie in Toni Cade Bambara's The Salt Eaters. Aunt Haydee in Shange's Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo and Naylor's Sapphira continue to serve as the legendary mother whereas Mama Day the inheritor of the wisdom of this mother serves as "everybody's mama". Both the novel and Sapphira Wade function as catalysts of emotional, psychological healing and ultimately lead to a spiritual triumph. By the presence of the conjurer, who is an embodiment of all motherly qualities, Naylor has established the Goddess myth, the spirit of Africa to the materialistic world by affirming a feminist consciousness which identify Gloria Naylor in Mama Day. Mircea Eliade compares these matriarchal and mythical women to, "paradigmatic model(s) for all other times" (65). For it is only by these women and their beliefs the community gets restored. The mythical time has been made present by recalling and retelling through the voices which Naylor has created. The past events enter into the present and continues into the future, all embedding a primordial mythical time made present" (Eliade 68).

The wisdom and power in one woman from Sapphira Wade to Mama Day have assisted the other in the healing process. For the liberation of women, a collective process of empowerment is essential. To achieve this, the abuse and the trauma have to be acknowledged and brought to a collective consciousness. Naylor has established the feminine power and dignity for the new millennium amidst an institutionalized patriarchy with a legacy of millions of abusive imprints (Edward 5). With all the matriarchal and mythical powers these abused women have introduced and

Tucker, "healing includes the ongoing process of seeing, healing and making" (186). This voice of the ancestral past ought to be listened to. Naylor has converted an oral myth to a written one there by has allowed the readers to listen, see, hear and ultimately get healed. □

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RESISTANCE TO SOCIALIZATION IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVELS

* *Anungla Imdong Phom*

In her conversation with Gita Viswanath, Shashi Deshpande opines, "we are shaped by our childhood and our parents".¹ In this article, I have made an attempt to analyze the Indian women's resistance to socialization in the context of Deshpande's novels so as to delineate their journey towards self-hood. Deshpande bares the subtle processes of oppression and gender differentiation operative within the institution of the family and the male-centered Indian society at large. Deshpande's feminism does not uproot the woman from her background but tries to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. These include social and psychological factors such as, woman's subordinate position in the family and her restricted sexuality. The author seeks to expose the ideology by which a woman is trained to play her subservient role in society. Her novels eclectically employ the postmodern technique of deconstructing patriarchal culture and customs, and reveal these to be man-made constructs.

In Deshpande's view, when women undertake their journey in pursuit of self-knowledge, they do not start light, "... we are already burdened with a baggage that has been given to us. The fact is that we don't start with a picture of ourselves on a clean slate. Inscribed on it already are things told to us by others that determine our behaviour, ideas, expectations and dreams".² Simone de Beauvoir's statement, "one is not born a woman, one becomes one",³ has a special relevance to India where conventions, religious and social taboos dictate and inhibit woman's individuality. Femininity as a cultural construct inscribes the society's views about women. The behavioural patterns for the Indian women are pre-determined by the caste into which one is born and the values and traditions of a culture that upholds archetypal images of woman.

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Ancient Indian literature and mythology have internalized the concept of the sacrificing mother and the devoted, enduring wife through the "image of Sati, Savitri and Shakuntala".⁴ As in any other society, women are considered custodians of cultural particularism by virtue of being less assimilated, both culturally and linguistically into the wider society. She is controlled in different ways so as to preserve the identities of national/ethnic collectivities.

The male domination in woman's life is a natural phenomenon in a patriarchal society and the consequent relegation of woman to a secondary position seemed to have prompted Indian women writers to take up the cause of women. They stressed the need for women to break free from the shackles of their traditional position and see their own need for self-fulfilment as more important than the duty of sacrificing themselves for their husbands and children. The new woman voices a note of resentment as they feel stifled under the oppressive restrictions. She has her own changed notions of life. It is true, "women's education, her rights of citizenship and other legal rights and above all her gainful employment and economic independence have tremendously influenced her outlook and conjugal relationship and attitude towards marriage".⁵

Shashi Deshpande as a writer offers feminist critiques of the patriarchal Indian society. Her art lies in selecting situations with which most Indian women can identify. Her focus is on the woman within marital, domestic relationship. According to Deshpande, there is a sharp division between women's world and men's world, "even today, you'll notice, to insult a man, you say, 'go wear bangles.' Bangles mean identification totally, and absolutely, with a woman".⁶ *The Binding Vine* projects the issue of resistance to such patriarchal ideology. The protagonist Urmila is the voice of resistance in the novel that voices a protest against the patriarchal attitude to the issue of rape. Two forms of gender violence are juxtaposed here in the case of Kalpana and Mira. If Kalpana lying in an unconscious state represents the silenced subaltern, in Mira's poems and diaries, writing itself becomes a

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police should not be informed as it will lead to Kalpana's disgrace and exposure is, in reality, an exposure of the societal attitude toward the rape victim and the patriarchal ideology that rape disgraces the victim rather than the culprit.

Her novels, featuring female protagonists, reconstruct aspects of women's experience and attempt to give voice to 'muted' ideologies, registering resistance and on her own admission, in her novels she charts, "the inner landscapes of women,"⁷ where she provides her women characters a context to understand themselves. Deshpande consistently explores the nature of the female world and reconstructs the suppressed records of female experience. She constructs contexts, representing different facets of the trapped female psyche, and attempts to transcend its boundaries. These narratives function as modes of women's experience underlining its resistance and simultaneously subverting it, which opens up a space where the, "marginal comes into being and retains its difference".⁸

The family can be perceived as a site where the tentacles of patriarchy manifest themselves overtly. Rigid gender roles and prescriptive behavioural norms often suffocate legitimate feminine aspirations. It is often a disgrace to be "clever" and as Akka's cousin Old Uncle puts it in *Roots and Shadows*, "for a woman, intelligence is always a burden... we like our women not to think".⁹ Family, religion and marriage are the constricting structures for women. Such structures rule out the exercise of individual choices. Another interesting instance of this is where Venu, the well known writer in *The Binding Vine*, advises Mira: "why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men."¹⁰ This is the kind of subjugation Indian women are faced with and so the recognition of such ideology works as a mode of resistance in Deshpande's novels. The effort of Urmila to publish Mira's poems also aims at discovering the strangled voice articulating woman's silenced discourse, deciphering the coded language and liberating the imagination of woman from interior to exterior. This may be taken to mean that Deshpande converts a muted woman to a

articulate the silence of women. This may also mean that she is a "revisionist questioning the adequacy of accepted conceptual structures".¹²

A Matter of Time resists patriarchy through positioning the three female characters in disadvantageous circumstances. Sumi and her three daughters return to the house owned by her mother Kalyani after she was deserted by her husband Gopal. Sumi accepts Gopal's decision placidly not because she lacks the courage to counter him but because she knows the futility of remonstrance. She says, "I just want to get on with my life... let him go, Aru, just let him go."¹³ A closer look at her refusal to react to Gopal shows not a passive acceptance of man's supremacy but a critique of tradition. Her method of resistance is balanced and motivated towards reclaiming her identity. She becomes economically independent, immerses herself in gardening, writes and directs plays and thus discovers herself. As she confronts the past with admirable self-control, Gopal thinks, "There is a sparkle to Sumi."¹⁴ It is the triumph of Sumi's restrained resistance that her husband who deserted her should speak admirably about her.

As against Sumi's controlled approach, Kalyani's strategy of defiance is far more formidable in its impenetrable silence. She is the victim of the power game and she has endured the anguish of rejection. Firstly, Manorama, her mother, rejected her mentally for being born a girl-child and she had adopted the strategy of resisting her mother's dominance by her stoic silence. Secondly, Shripati, her husband ceased all forms of communication with her ever since his only son was lost on the Bombay Railway station and he blamed his wife for the loss. Kalyani and her husband led to separate lives for the last thirty-four years by maintaining a stoic silence in their relationship.

Silence can be a powerful tool of resistance when it practices a lack of participation in the social power relations. Kalyani's resistance is so hard that even the author remarks in one of her interviews that Kalyani appears to Aru not "as a victim but as a woman come out of all that victimization intact."¹⁵ When silence becomes deliberate it acts as a barrier to the penetration of the

by a perceiver; it works as an operation of power rather than powerlessness. As it withholds communication it produces a kind of awe and becomes a potent tool of resistance. Deshpande valorizes Kalyani's individualistic, dogged resolve to resist her tortures and survive on her own terms.

Arundhati, the grand-daughter, voices her resistance more vociferously than the others. Her father's desertion brings with it social stigma and myriad unanswerable questions. She is piqued with her mother for not taking a stand against Gopal. In Aru's resistance there is the younger generation's impatience and restlessness to obtain justice. Not only their mother Sumi but also even her grandmother comes under scathing censure. Aru and her sisters cannot take in their grandmother's placid attitude and refusal to explain the circumstances under which her son was lost.

Though the three women are victims of patriarchal dominance, they reclaim their identity by their acts of resistance. Aru tries to reposition her lost situation by angry protests; Sumi regains her identity when her merit as an individual is recognized; and Kalyani feels empowered when Shripati's will, referring to her as Vithalrao and Manorama's daughter and not as his wife, is read out to her. She does not feel the sting of having been robbed of her marital status. "On the contrary, it is as if the words have given her something more than the house, restored something she had lost; they seem, in fact, to have strengthened her."¹⁶ It is her identity, her individuality that she finds ultimately.

Shashi Deshpande's novel *Moving On* also projects the protagonist Manjari as a woman who resists the patriarchal ideology and tries to live her life on her own terms. She displays enormous courage and steadfastness in her decision to give up studying medicine to marry Shyam, and again during such trying moments when it is revealed that her sister Malu is made pregnant by her husband. When Malu dies after giving birth to Sachi, followed by Shyam's suicide, Manjari faces a painful period of struggle and strain. Estranged from family, she grapples with innumerable difficulties to support herself and to survive with her

marriage without the foundation of love and only as a means of social security for a single woman is not acceptable to her.

Manjari shocks Raja, the upholder of patriarchal norms, by learning to drive her car and even trying to run it as a taxi, by installing and operating a computer at home and typing out manuscripts for others as a means of self-employment. When she is threatened by the mafia underworld and subject her to psychological pressure, and then, coerce her to sell out her ancestral home, Manjari disapproves Raja's role of the protecting male in her life saying: "I want the brakes under my feet, and not someone else's. I don't want a dual control, the control should be mine, mine alone."¹⁷ And later she dismisses the driver, telling him, "I'm quite capable of looking after myself."¹⁸ Manjari's struggle for freedom and for being autonomous is theoretically a challenge to patriarchy, not confronting it headlong but in discovering one's own strength as a woman.

In almost all societies, a woman is culturally assigned norms of behaviour in which standards of conduct and decorum set the boundaries for her as external signs of what it means to be seemingly proper and respectable within the differentiated hierarchy called gender. Any form of deviation from prescribed norms or any display of transgressive potential in violation to the ideal image of womanhood makes her an unruly woman to be ostracized by society. As Bartky points out, the situation of woman is such that she, a free and autonomous being, finds herself in a world where she is compelled by man to assume the status of an inferior to whatever man imagines himself to be. Women are bound to their oppression, "by male control of the dominant institutions and the dominant ideology..."¹⁹ Hence, in order both to gain equality and to realize their human potential, women must transcend their distinctive femaleness to lead the kind of life men do, in other words, they must be autonomous. Beauvoir exhorts women to achieve autonomy, to discover and nurture their authentic self through lived experience for self-realization. This argument may apply in case of Manjari, as she negotiates many opposed discourses and

In the context of the changing world we live in, it has become imperative to do away with separate domains for woman and man and to redefine man-woman relationship as equal and complementary and not on terms of domination and subordination. For Deshpande, "A world without frightened, dependent, trapped, frustrated women is a better world for all of us to live in."²⁰

In *That Long Silence*, Jaya's journey towards a well-defined self-hood is mired in the labyrinthine mazes of societal pressure and feminine conditioning to fashion her according to the accepted norms of behaviour which culminates in a long silence. Her silence is symptomatic of alienation and apprehension rooted in every woman's soul in different forms. Deshpande makes her position regarding the status of women quite clear in her novels through the portrayal of her protagonists' inner and outer journeys. In the words of the novelist: "Until women get over the handicaps imposed by society, outside and inner conditioning, the human race will not realize its full potential."²¹ For Deshpande, the statement of emancipation seems to lie in the freedom and responsibility of choice, "they are not allowed to wallow in the victimhood, and come to realize that they made traditional, regressive choices when other options were open to them."²²

Jaya, in the novel is projected as a woman who wants to fashion herself according to the dreams of her husband that is, by imitating the life pattern of women in orthodox families, as it will give her, "freedom from guilt."²³ She opts for a hair-cut like Mehra's wife, sits and creams her face at night, rubbing it in circles as she had read she should, brushes her hair religiously and says, "fifty strokes on either side. I had always been apprehensive of not pleasing him as a woman."²⁴ But her innate sensitivity revolts against these attempts to cram herself into the ideological mould of a conventional wife. To conform to the ideals of a wife and a mother she suppresses her emotional needs, which makes her lonely and vulnerable. She says, "I had to admit the truth to myself that I had often found family life unendurable. Worse than anything else had been the boredom of the unchanging pattern, the unending monotony."²⁵

In her march towards emancipation and self-hood, the contemporary Indian woman has to struggle against the insensitive fatality of options and the indoctrination of centuries which endeavour to fashion her into the mould of 'womanhood' with a silent persistence. The author has portrayed women who exhibit the results of this indoctrination in their psyche and behaviour. Her 'Ajis' and 'Kakis' are the women who could not have the opportunity to develop and grow except in home and family related roles and have surrendered to the traditional clap-trap about the women's-place-at-home-only. This self-deception also perpetuates the power-equations, as Vrinda Nabar points out: "Whereby the woman/mother eventually sees her imprisonment as empowering her by conferring on her the attributes of mother and wife. She sees these largely in relation to the men in the domestic power hierarchy. She thus becomes a symbol of what men later expect their women to be. She is imprinted on the children's consciousness as sublime sufferer, selfless slave, tireless worker for her family's comfort and happiness."²⁶

Deshpande's novels sympathetically record the lives of such women as one of her themes. She has endeavoured to transmit the basic anxiety, loneliness and helplessness of their situation. The novel sensitively presents how a woman's existence is confined within domesticity and how all forms of oppression perpetuated on her are convincingly rationalized generating a closed-mind syndrome. The figure of Mohan's mother can be quoted as an example. In Jaya's narration, "the woman's crouching in front of the dying fire, sitting blank and motionless, the huddled bundles of sleeping children on the floor, the utter silence."²⁷

Mohan's mother had to wait for her husband late into the night, cooking the rice again and keeping it hot as 'he' wanted it fresh hot and from an untouched vessel, declining to eat what he called, "your children's disgusting leavings."²⁸ The wife's long vigil and patient wait becomes futile when angry at not having fresh chutney to eat, he picks up the heavy brass plate, throws it at the wall and leaves the house. Silently, picking up the plate she cleans the wall and the floor of the spattered food and sends her

door to borrow some chillies. Patiently and silently she prepares fresh chutney, lights the fire, cooks the meal again and sits down to wait. Her son Mohan, who has been a witness to this incident, never condemns his father. He eulogizes his mother saying, "... she was tough. Women in those days were tough."²⁹

The chains of traditional marriage are heavy. In the absence of any escape routes, wives often seek consolation in obsession, or mental slavery leading to physical decay. The social ethos which has seen to the continuity of women's suppression sees to it that unacknowledged martyrdom becomes a part of housewife's existence. She is expected to subordinate her own needs to those of her family. The continued exaltation of self-effacing norms creates an environment which pressurizes a woman to accept or at least not to resist them. Often silence is the only option to women in such situations.

That Long Silence portrays a suffering and deprivations of feminine life by representing such characters as stereotyped representatives of traditional womanhood. The novel also presents a critique of the myths which are perpetuated and practiced in the context of femininity. But the strength of the novel lies in its bold analysis of the realities about the Indian womanhood. The novel assertively exhibits the thesis that women should have an assertive individuality which includes the capability to take decisions about their life and carry them out with a sense of responsibility. Their emotional and intellectual liberation does not negate the possibility of nurturing and enjoying various relationships which the society and the biological nature have imposed upon them. Within the societal roles she can be herself by erasing her conditioning, and freeing her from her inhibitions. The haunting riddle of the ultimate purpose of a woman's life within the family can be solved when she learns to assess her worth as an individual and shuns to be guided by pre-fixed norms about it.

The protagonist Jaya realizes that in order to attain self-hood, a woman must transcend silence, negation and self-alienation. A woman's relation with her family must burgeon within the totality of her life as a woman, only then it can lead to a harmonious

Jaya understands that a holistic yet resilient approach towards life is necessary, "we don't change overnight. It's possible that we may not change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything to know now it is this: life has always to be made possible."³⁰ Her decision to cease to be a passive partner and overcome the turbulence in her relationship with Mohan leads her to an uninhibited self-identification.

The novel clearly spells out the faith that a woman's desire to succeed like an individual does not negate her desire for love, marriage and domesticity. A balanced and purposeful life is not a utopian fancy for a woman if she liberates herself from the stereotyped conditioning of the society and is not dependent on the male presence to authenticate her thoughts and deeds at every step. *That Long Silence* aesthetically communicates the essence of the creed of feminism along with contemporary realities. □

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PRISON WRITINGS : LITERATURE BORN BEHIND THE BARS

* Dr. S.S. Biradar

Literature produced behind the bars may be termed as 'prison literature'. It is writing done by a person while in prison and published later on. Many classics of world literature have been written either in prison or in the shadow of the prison. A close study of the history of world literature bears witness to the fact that the prison house has been a cradle for many budding poets, philosophers, essayists, historians and even novelists and editors. Noted politicians, when thrown into jail, seem to have been bitten by the writer's bug.

Sir Francis Bacon, a jailbird genius and father of the English Essay, wrote some of his sparkling essays during his five-year imprisonment. John Bunyan's magnum opus *The Pilgrim's Progress*, delineating the journey of the soul to the Holy city, was written while he was locked up in Bedford jail for twelve long years because of his refusal to obey the law of the land. It is said that *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into more languages than any other book except the *Holy Bible*. Cervantes, whose youth was spent in captivity, wrote his masterpiece *The Adventures of Don Quixote*, the most good-humoured story among the world's classics, in jail. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, one of the most widely-read books, was born within stone walls, when he was arrested, fined and imprisoned for his biting satires on the politics of the land. Fyodor Dostoevsky, the greatest of the 19th century Russian novelists, was also sent to prison where he wrote his two novels *The Manor of Stepanchikovo* and *The House of the Dead*.

Lenin also wrote one of his revolutionary books in prison. Instead of ink, he used milk to avoid detection while writing letters from jail. Richard Lovelace, another jailbird genius, was also cast into an English prison where he wrote the most popular and unforgettable lines: "Stone walls do not a prison make / Nor Iron

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bars a cage". Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason (1793) was also a product of his incarceration for nearly a year. William Sydney Porter, a cashier in a bank, was accused and charge-sheeted for forgery and sent to prison where he started writing, under the pseudonym O. Henry, short-stories which today serve as models for all aspiring short-story writers.

Sir Walter Raleigh wrote his most ambitious book The History of the World (1614) during his long imprisonment. Most of the satirical writings of Voltaire, known for his sharp wit, biting satire and cynicism, were also written in prison. Oscar Wilde's De Profundis, his spiritual autobiography, and The Ballad of Reading Gaol, his famous poem, were also the result of his imprisonment. Upton Sinclair's radicalist novels, which probably helped to bring about the Russian revolution, were also a prison product.

India has not lagged behind in producing prison literature. India's prison literature is quite affluent. The list of Indians who were taken into custody and imprisoned is miles long. Suffice it to say that many prisoners became authors while they were behind bars. Perhaps the peace and quiet of the prison house seem to have inspired many a writer to produce masterpieces of literature.

It will be surprising to know that the greater part of *the story of My Experiments with Truth*, the world famous autobiography of M.K. Gandhi, was written during the author's imprisonment at various jails in India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru too wrote his masterpieces An Autobiography, Glimpses of World History and The Discovery of India in prison. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's Feathers and Stones was also born behind bars when its author was put in the Ahmadnagar Fort, along with other agitators for Swaraj.

How many of us really know that the Gita Rahasya was the most fruitful result of Tilak's imprisonment from November 1910 to March 1911? N.G. Jog, in his biography Lokamanya Balagangadhar Tilak observes: "Tilak thus joined the ranks of illustrious prisoners like Bunyan, Raleigh, Voltaire and Paine, who wrote their classics in jail".¹

Sri Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari, widely known as 'Ra-

Abdul Gaffarkhan was hailed as "Frontier Gandhi", Rajaji was known as "Dakshina Gandhi". Rajaji was put in jail for at least half a dozen times during the period from 1921 to 1942. He wrote some of his books, both in English & Tamil, while he was in prison. His English books include A Jail Diary, The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, Kamba Ramayana - Ayodhya Kanda, Cripps Mission, Satyam Eva Jayate, Voice of the Uninvolved.

Rajaji's A Jail Diary, written in the Vellore Central Jail, covers a period of nearly four months from 21.12.1921 to 20.03.1922. His diary is no dry-as-dust account but a narrative enlivened by imaginative flights and picturesque phrasing. Rajaji colours the narrative of the jail events and happenings, with his passionate feelings and astute ideas.

Vijayalakshmi Pandit, affectionately called "Swarup" by the members of her family, was a shrewd diplomat. Like her father Motilal and brother Jawaharlal, she too wrote books in prison. The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir and Prison Days are her two important prison books. Prison Days was intermittently written in Nani Jail during the days of her imprisonment. In her diary Prison Days she records the hardships of jail life in general and her own jail life in particular to let posterity know the grim stories that were enacted behind the prison gates. Mrs. Pandit wrote her diary in a style that is exceedingly attractive. Her writing is marked by crispness of style.

Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly called 'JP' and widely known as such, was a dynamic political leader and political theorist. He too wrote books while in prison. A Prison Diary is one of them. Like Gandhi and Vinoba, JP also was a political sanyasi, who denied himself all the comforts of political life. He could have become the Prime Minister or the President of free India, if he had so wished. In his jail diary, JP criticises the Emergency and autocratic rule of the times. He was more than a match in strength of mind for his political adversaries and his pen was sharp enough to fight the autocratic rule of the day most effectively.

L.K. Advani's prison writings are an important addition not only to the treasure of Indian English prison writings but also to

literature on the Emergency, with some insights into the JP movement. His *A Prisoner's Scrap-Book* explores the meaning of nation, nationhood, democracy etc. The book gains its importance as an authentic document on the emergency that threatened democracy in India.

Snehalata Reddy, a versatile genius (a dancer, artist, director, social activist and above all a humanitarian), was imprisoned in May 1976 without any specific charges made against her. In the dark barracks of Bangalore Central Jail, being deprived of human companionship and activities, Snehalata began to unburden her heavy heart into the diary because, "paper has more patience than man".

Snehalata's accounts in the diary are vivid and varied, with a deep and livid sense of the loss of liberty, the experience of abduction, violence of the police, her health problems, her sense of utter desolation, the physical torture and the consequent mental suffering.

No one can therefore afford to ignore the literature produced behind the bars in the world while surveying world literature in general, because prison literature is not only sizeable in quantity but considerable in quality as well. The British Government in India indirectly helped a lot towards the production of an everlasting body of literature behind the bars by putting men and women of political genius and literary talent into prison at the time of the freedom struggle. The British Government of the day certainly deserves a vote of thanks on that account!

The great statesmen of the world have proved that imprisonment may be a curse to the common run of people but it is certainly a blessing to the extraordinary few. Morarji Desai, a great statesman, expresses a similar opinion more beautifully, when he writes: "Prison is meant to be a punishment. But the *Satyagrahi* converts it into a challenge for deepening his political faith and his personal capabilities".² It is true that one's imagination remains free even in captivity. One's mind begins to vegetate or takes to the air like a bird when one sits down with pen and paper, and the bars fall away. For quite a few of the illustrious sons and daughters

of the world, imprisonment was a spur not only to their patriotic sentiments, driving them on the march towards the ultimate goal, but also to the creation of great literature of eternal value.

Most of the eminent politicians and social reformers, who formed a class called nation builders, never hesitated to embrace imprisonment. As creative minds they turned to pen and paper (writing) to record their ideas, thoughts, actions, reactions, joys, sorrows and sufferings as the most fruitful pastime and antidote to loneliness.

Thus English prison writings are seen to be classics in their own right, in as much as they sprang from the hearts of the prisoners who welcomed imprisonment and entered gaol unhesitatingly for the national cause, and blossomed like "flowers of fire". Under any circumstances these writings are not to be neglected, because they have, in fact, literary merit as also historical importance. □

Balram breaks out of his cage in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

** Dr. A.J. Sebastian sdb*

Aravind Adiga bagged the Man Booker Prize 2008 for his debut novel *The White Tiger*, set in the backdrop of the economic boom in India that has ushered in a great chasm between the haves and have-nots. As Adiga himself has said: "Well, this is the reality for a lot of Indian people and it's important that it gets written about, rather than just hearing about the 5% of people in my country who are doing well. ...At a time when India is going through great changes and, with China, is likely to inherit the world from the west, it is important that writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustices of society" (Jeffries).

Balram Halwai, who never had an identity of his own, uses any means necessary to fulfill his dream of making money. He

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becomes a megalomaniac who murders his boss and confesses his rising to be an entrepreneur in the call centre hub of Bangalore. He calls his life's story 'The Autobiography of a Half-Baked Indian.' (TWT 10).

This paper attempts to trace the metaphor of the Rooster Coop in which Balram is trapped and the way he breaks out to freedom being a 'white tiger.'

The novel is written in the epistolary form as a seven-part letter to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao "From the Desk of 'The White Tiger' / A Thinking Man / And an entrepreneur / Living in the world's centre of technology and outsourcing/ Electronic City Phase 1 (just off Hosur Main Road/ Bangalore/ India)," (TWT 3) in which Balram confesses his guilt and his ambition – his emergence from the world of "Darkness" to the world of "Light" of the cities which is a world of servants and masters: from brutal poverty and deprivation to successful entrepreneurship. His cynicism and deep rooted-immoral ways are dangerous trends leading to anarchy in our society. The novel exposes Indian democracy, injustice and entrepreneurship.

The novel is a social commentary and a study of injustice and power in the form of a class struggle in India that depicts the anti-hero Balram representing the downtrodden sections of the Indian society juxtaposed against the rich. "*The White Tiger* protagonist exposes the rot in the three pillars of modern India - democracy, enterprise and justice – reducing them to the tired clichés of a faltering nation.... that the West is holding *The White Tiger* as a mirror to us. It is telling us that India is not shining and, despite its claims of a booming economy, it is still "the near-heart of darkness", which it has been since time immemorial" (Saxena 9).

As Adiga says: "The novel is written in "voice"—in Balram's voice—and not in mine. Some of the things that he's confused by or angry about are changes in India that I approve of; ... Some of the other things he's unhappy about—like corruption—are easier for me to identify with. When talking to many men whom I met in India, I found a sense of rage, often suppressed for years and

would burst out when they finally met someone they could talk to... Balram's anger is not an anger that the reader should participate in entirely—it can seem at times like the rage you might feel if you were in Balram's place—but at other times you should feel troubled by it, certainly" (DiMartino).

The story unfolds the way Balram breaks out to his new found freedom from a caged life of misery through crime and cunning. This is a reflection of contemporary India, calling attention to social justice in the wake of economic prosperity. It is a novel about the emerging new India which is pivoted on the great divide between the haves and have-nots with moral implications.

Deirdre Donahue labels *The White Tiger* an angry novel about injustice and power "But *Tiger* isn't about race or caste in India. It's about the vast economic inequality between the poor and the wealthy elite. The narrator is an Indian entrepreneur detailing his rise to power. His India is a merciless, corrupt Darwinian jungle where only the ruthless survive" (Donahue).

Adiga depicts his protagonist as "...he's talking out into the night, in his isolated room. He has to tell his story to someone, but he can't ever do so because it's a terrible story. ...today, it is the man from China, which is India's alter-ego in so many ways. Indians today are absolutely obsessed with the Chinese, and keep comparing themselves to China out of a belief that the future of the world lies with India and China." (DiMartino).

Adiga's first hand meeting with the poor of India inspired him to create his protagonist: "Many of the Indians I met while I traveled through India blended into Balram; but the character is ultimately of my own invention. I wanted to depict someone from India's underclass—which is perhaps 400 million strong—and which has largely missed out on the economic boom, and which remains invisible in most films and books coming out of India... someone whose moral character seems to change by the minute—trustworthy one minute, but untrustworthy the next—who would embody the moral contradictions of life in today's India. I'm glad you point out that he is a hustler—which he is!—one of the

a book like this is that so many critics seem to think that Balram's views are meant to be taken objectively!" (DiMartino).

Summing up the Booker jury's decision Michael Portillo commented: "The novel undertakes the extraordinarily difficult task of gaining and holding the reader's sympathy for a thoroughgoing villain. The book gains from dealing with pressing social issues and significant global developments with astonishing humour." (Portillo). The novel is a witty parable of India's changing society, yet there is also much to ponder (Rushby).

The novel is centred on the crime Balram commits and he goes on to recount how he became an entrepreneur coming into the 'Light' of prosperity. Born in a tiny hell-hole called Laxmangarh in northern India, his impoverished parents merely called him 'munna' — 'boy' and they raised him in the world of darkness of their extreme poverty. While at school, Balram was spotted by the inspector of schools who offered to get a scholarship for his education:

You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals – the creature that comes along only once in a generation?'

I thought about it and said:

'The white tiger.'

'That's what you are, in this jungle' (TWT 35).

Balram considers himself "half-baked" as he was deprived of schooling like most children of his age group in India. His parents preferred him to work in a teashop, however one of the feudal lords took him to Delhi, where he began to experience the world of light. He learned driving and was employed as a chauffeur by Mr. Ashok at Dhanbad.

While in Delhi Balram experiences the two kinds of India with those who are eaten, and those who eat, prey and predators. Balram decides to be an eater, someone with a big belly, and the novel tracks the way in which this ambition plays out (Walters).

The key metaphor in the novel is of the Rooster Coop. Balram is caged like the chickens in the rooster coop. He, being a white tiger, has to break out of the cage to freedom.

Go to Old Delhi ...and look at the way they keep chickens there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages...They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country (TWT 173-4).

Balram decides to become a big-bellied man, by resorting to corrupt ways he has learnt through bribery, crime, disregarding all civilized ways of life. His violent bid for freedom is shocking. Is he made just another thug in India's urban jungle or a revolutionary and idealist? (Turpin). Adiga "strikes a fine balance between the sociology of the wretched place he has chosen as home and the twisted humanism of the outcast" (Prasannarajan). Balram breaks away slowly from his family which is contrary to the Indian tradition where loyalty to one's family upholds moral principles. Through his criminal drive Balram becomes a businessman and runs a car service for the call centres in Bangalore.

Balram's commentary is replete with Irony, paradox, and anger that run like a poison throughout every page (Andrew). "Above all, it's a vision of a society of people complicit in their own servitude: to paraphrase Balram, they are roosters guarding the coop, aware they're for the chop, yet unwilling to escape. Ultimately, the tiger refuses to stay caged. Balram's violent bid for freedom is shocking" (Turpin).

The protagonist confirms that the trustworthiness of servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy. This is a paradox and a mystery of India.

Because Indians are the world's most honest people... No. It's because 99.9 per cent of us are caught in the Rooster coop just like those poor guys in the poultry market. The Rooster Coop doesn't always

miniscule sums of money. Don't test your chauffeur with a rupee coin or two - he may well steal that much. But leave a million dollars in front of a servant and he won't touch a penny... Masters trust their servants with diamonds in this country!... Why doesn't that servant take the suitcase full of diamonds? He is no Gandhi, he's human, he's you and me. But he's in the rooster Coop...Here in India we have no dictatorship. No secret police. That's because we have the coop. Never before in human history have so few owed so much to so many, Mr. Jiabao. A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 per cent – as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way – to exist in perpetual servitude... can a man break out of the coop? ...the Indian family, is the reason we are trapped and tied to the coop....only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed – hunted, beaten, and burned alive by masters – can break out of the coop. That would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert

Balam shows his perverted psychopathic nature by deciding to break out of the coop betraying his family and society. He has to suffer humiliation in the hands of his masters with ever increasing menial duties which climaxes in his being blackmailed when Ashok's wife Pinky kills a man in drunken driving. He was forced to sign a statement accepting full responsibility for the accident

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I, Balam Hawlai, son of Vikram Halwai, of Laxmangarh village in the district of Gaya, do make the following statement of my own free will and intention:

That I drove the car that hit an unidentified person, or persons, or person and objects, on the night of January 23rd of this year. That I then panicked and refused to fulfil my obligations to the

emergency ward. That there were no other occupants of the car at the time of the accident. That I was alone in the car, and alone responsible for all that happened.

I swear by almighty God that I make this statement under no duress and under instruction from no one (TWT 168).

He has to suppress his embittered feelings being confined to the Rooster Coop. He cannot go contrary to his master's bidding. He is falsely implicated and forced to accept responsibility for a crime he has not committed. A remorse filled Pinky madam leaves Mr. Ashok for good in the middle of the night pushing a fat envelope with cash into Balam's hands. From then on, he has to play the wife-substitute for Mr. Ashok. He has to oversee his master's every need as he turns to heavy drinking. Left to control his master, Balam begins to awaken from his reverie in the Rooster Coop. Having been a witness to all of Ashok's corrupt practices and gambling with money to buy politicians, to kill and to loot, Balam decides to steal and kill. Adiga delves deep into his subconscious like the stream of consciousness novelists:

Go on, just look at the red bag, Balam – that's not stealing, is it?

I shook my head.

And even you were to steal it, Balam, it wouldn't be stealing.

How so? I looked at the creature in the mirror.

See- Mr. Ashok is giving money to all these politicians in Delhi so that they will excuse him from the tax he has to pay. And who owns that tax, in the end? Who but the ordinary people of this country – you! (244).

Balam knew his boss had collected a total of Rs.700,000/- stuffed into the red bag. That was sufficient money for him to begin a new life with a house of his own, a motorbike and a small shop. He hatched the murder plan in quick succession:

I touched the magnetic stickers of the goddess Kali for luck, then opened the glove compartment. There it was – the broken bottle, with its claws of glass. 'There's something off with the wheel, sir. Just give me a couple

There was soggy black mud everywhere. Picking my way over mud and rainwater, I squatted near the left rear wheel... 'Sir, will you step out, there is a problem.'... The wheel, sir. I'll need your help. It's stuck in the mud' (281-2).

Adiga probes further into the mind of Balram like an expert psychologist and finds him in perfect mental state, determined to execute his plans with precision:

He was still wriggling – his body was moving as far from me as it could. I'm losing him, I thought, and this forced me to do something I knew I would hate myself for, even years later. I really didn't want to do this – I really didn't want him to think, even in the two or three minutes he had left to live, that I was that kind of a driver – the one that resorts to blackmailing his master – but he had left me no option:... I got down on my knees and hid behind the car... He got down on his knees. I rose over him, holding the bottle held behind my back with a bent arm... I rammed the bottle down. The glass ate his bone. I rammed it three times into the crown of his skull, smashing through to his brains....The stunned body fell into the mud. A hissing sound came out of its lips, like wind escaping from a tyre (284-5).

He was not fully satisfied with the crime. He feared his recovery and the consequences would be fatal – police case and the terrible destruction of his family. So turning the body around and stamping his knees on its chest, he pierced the neck “and his lifeblood spurted into my eyes. I was blind. I was a free man” (286).

He is free at last out of the Rooster Coop. But the run for his new-found life begins for Balram. He is on the run to make his dream come true. A peep into the level of poverty into which millions of his fellow Indians are plunged is imperative for a proper assessment of the criminal and the gravity of his crime.

Statistics show how poverty is on the rise in India: i) 4 in every 10 Indian children are malnourished according to a UN report. ii) India Ranks a lowly 66 out of 88 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2008. The report says India has more hungry people

of the world's poor live in India, according to the latest poverty estimates from the World Bank. Based on its new threshold of poverty - \$ 1.25 a day – the number of poor people has gone up from 421 million in 1981 to 456 million in 2005. iv) India ranks 128 out of 177 countries in the UN's Human Development Index.... Aravind Adiga's story of a rickshawallah's move from the “darkness” of rural India to the “light” of urban Gurgaon reminds us of the harsh facts behind the fiction. (Raaj 9).

Adiga speaks out his mind why he wrote the novel: “... I want to challenge this idea that India is the world's greatest democracy. It may be so in an objective sense, but on the ground, the poor have such little power... I wanted something that would provoke and annoy people ... The servant-master system implies two things: One is that the servants are far poorer than the rich—a servant has no possibility of ever catching up to the master. And secondly, he has access to the master—the master's money, the master's physical person. Yet crime rates in India are very low... What is stopping a poor man from taking to the crime that occurs in Venezuela or South Africa? You need two things [for crime to occur]—a divide and a conscious ideology of resentment. We don't have resentment in India. The poor just assume that the rich are a fact of life. For them, getting angry at the rich is like getting angry at the heat... But I think we're seeing what I believe is a class-based resentment for the first time...” (Sawhney).

Injustice and inequality has always been around us and we get used to it. How long can it go on? Social discontent and violence has been on the rise. What Adiga highlights is the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor and the economic system that lets a small minority to prosper at the expense of the majority. “At a time when India is going through great changes and, with China, is likely to inherit the world from the west, it is important that writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustices of society... the great divide.” (Raaj 9).

Commenting on a servant's viewpoint in the novel, Adiga writes: "It is his subjective views, which are pretty depressing. There are also two crimes that he commits: he robs, and he kills, and by no means do I expect a reader to sympathize with both the crimes. He's not meant to be a figure whose views you should accept entirely. There's evidence within the novel that the system is more flexible than Balram suggests, and it is breaking down faster than he claims. And within the story I hope that there's evidence of servants cheating the masters systematically... to suggest a person's capacity for evil or vice is to grant them respect—is to acknowledge their capacity for volition and freedom of choice" (Sawhney).

When he plans meticulously how to snatch Ashok's huge money bag, he gets out of his Rooster Coop and takes a plunge into the entrepreneur's world. He never gives up the fight for survival like the freak white tiger. While visiting the National zoo in Delhi he tells Dharam: "Let animals live like animals; let humans live like humans. That's my whole philosophy in a sentence" (TWT 276). When he chanced to see the white tiger in the enclosure, he began his musings: "...Not any kind of tiger. The creature that gets born only once every generation in the jungle. I watched him walk behind the bamboo bars... He was hypnotizing himself by walking like this – that was the only way he could tolerate this cage....The tiger's eyes met my eyes, like my master's eyes have met mine in the mirror of the car. All at once, the tiger vanished... My knees began to shake; I felt light" (276-7).

This sequence is central to the Rooster Coop metaphor. It is like the epiphanic experience of Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where he makes his flight of fancy: "... a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being?... His heart trembled in an ecstasy of fear and his soul was in flight" (Joyce 154).

It is the experience of being hypnotized by the tiger that energizes the criminal in him to be blood thirsty and take law into his own hands. The more he is educated, he becomes more corrupt, and the reader's sympathy for the psychopath never dwindles.

Such crimes are taking place in our cities. Recently it was reported that workers at a car parts factory near Delhi murdered the chief executive after they were laid off. "It rattled a lot of people," says Adiga. "That kind of incident used to be highly unlikely. Now it is much more likely" (Times Online).

Neel Mukherjee in his review "Exposing the real India," examines the 'economic miracle' in the background of "a very large majority lives in abject, shocking poverty, that the gap between the rich and the poor is a vast, unbridgeable, ever-growing chasm, and that social redistribution policies are either unenforceable or have failed?" (Mukherjee).

The Rooster Coop continues to exist like a never ending oppressive system. "The rooster Coop was doing its work. Servants have to keep other servants from becoming innovators, experimenters, or entrepreneurs...The coop is guarded from the inside" (TWT 194). As Andrew Holgate opines, "Rather than encouraging freedom and "enterprise," everything in this system — landlords, family, education, politics — seems designed specifically to suppress them" (Holgate).

Balram escaping from the Coop, is a servant turned villain and a murderer who becomes a self-proclaimed entrepreneur who calls himself "*I'm tomorrow*" (TWT 6). He subscribes to a philosophy of future with hope. As he awaits to board a train he gets on to a weight machine which represents for him "final alarm bell of the Rooster Coop. The sirens of the coop were ringing - its wheels turning – its red lights flashing! A rooster was escaping from the coop! A hand was thrust out – I was picked up by the neck and shoved back into the coop. I picked the chit up and re-read it"(248). His subconscious kept haunting him of his escape from the coop of his past oppression. Moving from train to train he keeps his track untraceable by the law enforcing agencies who had advertised his pictures as a wanted man.

Life in Bangalore has to be that of a fugitive as “White Tiger keeps no friends. It’s too dangerous” (302). But he has to keep in touch with the world of the road and the pavement where he received his education to freedom. Speaking of the socialist leaders in Bangalore on whom people placed their hope of revolution.

Keep your ears open in Bangalore – in any city or town in India – and you will hear stirrings, rumours, threats of insurrection. Men sit under lampposts at night and read. Men huddle together and discuss and point fingers to the heavens. One night, will they all join together – will they destroy the Rooster coop? ...Maybe once in a hundred years there is a revolution that frees the poor (303).

Sitting in his comfortable office as an entrepreneur living in the world’s centre of technology and outsourcing, Balram is confident that he will not be caught by law enforcing agents as he has stepped out of the coop of his past.

I think the Rooster coop needs people like me to break out of it. It needs masters like Mr. Ashok – who, for all his numerous virtues, was not much of a master – to be weeded out, and exceptional servants like me to replace them...I am one of those who cannot be caught in India... I’ve made it! I’ve broken out of the coop!...I’ll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master’s throat. I’ll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant (TWT 320-1).

In portraying the character of Balram, Adiga has excelled in projecting a typical psychopath / sociopath, our society can churn out. In “Behavioural Traits of Psychopaths”, Jennifer Copley points out: “While most people’s actions are guided by a number of factors, such as the desire to avoid hurting other people, the psychopath selects a course of action based on only one factor—what can he get out of it. This cold-blooded mode of reasoning enables the psychopath to commit acts that most people’s consciences would not allow” (Copley). Psychopaths are also

known as sociopaths who are manipulative, deceitful, impulsive lacking self-restraint, and inclined to take risks. They are “Callous, deceitful, reckless, guiltless The psychopath understands the wishes and concerns of others; he simply does not care.... The psychopath believes that rules and morals are for other, weaker people who obey because they fear punishment” (Adams) . . . All these traits are found in Balram who goes about heroically planning his heinous crimes.

The novel exposes the ferociousness of the man who after bloodletting through murder will turn out to be a man-eater himself. What guarantees if he will not commit murders for reasons of rivalry in his entrepreneurial world of cut throat competition. Revenge murder is no solution to bring about social justice. Subscribing to his principle of taking law into his own hands, will lead only to anarchy and escalation of violence, as W.B. Yeats points out in “The Second Coming,” in the background of Russian revolution as well as the Irish troubles:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity (Yeats 1700).*

Excessive economic inequalities and unwarranted delay in applying the remedies for them are often the causes of such dissension. Besides, quest for power and total disregard for human rights helps escalate violence and strife among men. There is need for organizations that promote peace among men. Remedial measures have to be taken by Government and law makers to prevent rampant corruption and oppression of the downtrodden. Let not the law of the jungle prevail as Adiga has proven through his protagonist. Mere anarchy and chaos will prevail if an evil is hatched to counter another evil.

There are some Indians who wonder if the award was given to *The White Tiger* to mar the face of India in the international arena as she is becoming a global economic power. Is the West exposing our poverty and unrest to hurt our national pride? Such fears are baseless as Adiga has brought out a fable with superb mingling of his observation. Though several critics have raised eyebrows stating that Adiga has not depicted the brave new India in a sufficiently glowing light, David Godwin comes to his rescue saying, "It really isn't the job of a writer to be the ambassador for his country. A writer's commitment is to the truth as he sees it" (Roy 4). Manjula Padmanabhan, author and playwright, is very critical of Adiga when she says that the book is "a tedious, unfunny slog, ...compelling, angry and darkly humourous... But is this schoolboyish sneering the best that we can do? Is it enough to paint an ugly picture and then suggest that the way out is to slit the oppressor's throat and become an oppressor oneself?" (Padmanabhan). Whatever be the critical appraisal, as Gurcharan Das would opine, "A book should not be judged on the basis of whether it creates a negative or positive picture of a country. It should be seen as a work of art and judged on its literary merits" (Das).

However, *The White Tiger* should make every right thinking citizen to read the signs of the times and be socially conscious of the rights and duties of each one, irrespective of cast, creed or economic status, to prevent create the types of Ashok and Balram in our society.

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THE POETRY OF MONALISA CHANGKIJA : AN ECOFEMINIST READING

* Dr. Nigamananda Das

A major contemporary Indian Naga ecofeminist, Tiame-renla Monalisa Changkija, born in Jorhat, Assam on 2nd March 1960, is a poet and journalist. A professional journalist, now settled in Dimapur, Nagaland, she is also the first Naga poet to be invited by the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum in 1997 to present her poems at Oslo, Norway where she presented her second collection of poems entitled *Monsoon Mourning* which reflects the Naga society of the late 1980s and 1990s. Her first collection of poems *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain* (1993) reveals her primary concerns as a poet and crusader against the evils of Naga society and ill-treatment of women class and ecology as a whole.

Fiona Tolan, speaking about Mary Daly's treatment of the causes of 'women' and 'ecology' says :

Unlike de Beauvoir, Daly did not envision liberation in the transcendence of the feminine, but rather in the celebration of its immanence – the inherent connection of femininity to nature and the body. ... The ascendancy of patriarchy had involved the murder of women living outside patriarchal control, such as unmarried or widowed women, and wise women healers, who were burned as witches by the Church. ... In Gyn/Ecology, Daly advised women to reject the tools of patriarchy including religion and language, and 'wildize' themselves. Her emphasis on language as a tool of patriarchy became increasingly important to second wave feminism. ...

Daly's connection with ecology – the relationship of humans with their environment - was founded in her belief that women had a natural tendency towards pacifism and nurture that enabled them to

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live in harmony with the environment, unlike men, who compete with nature, struggling to dominate the environment as they dominate women. ... Ecofeminists argued that women, nature, and the Third World are all victims at the hands of an exploitative male capitalist technology, and ecofeminists frequently used the image of 'the web of life' to express the themes of cooperation, interdependence, and harmony (Waugh 324-5).

Pronouncing the key insight of ecofeminism Richard Kerridge says, "Beliefs that legitimate the oppression of women also legitimate environmental degradation" (Waugh 538). Thus "ecofeminism is a revolutionary ideology to safeguard our ecology/environment" (Das 72).

Ecological inequilibrium is a recurrent obsession with Monalisa Changkija. She is a "sentinel of time" (Chandra and Das 62) and her poems expose the ecological changes in Nagaland that disturb her morally. Prefacing her poems Monalisa speaks of her feminist concerns :

The first part of this collection, WEAPONS OF WORDS ON PAGES OF PAIN and TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN reflects some of my thoughts on battered and abused women, on domestic violence and on women's ability to rise above the "second class citizenry". Yes, I am empathizing with and also crying out at the same time along with women who have suffered and continue to suffer in a discriminate society.

No, I don't claim to know all there is on the subject. No, I am not a battered wife. I have however experienced domestic violence, memories of which are deeply etched in my mind and the pain still in my heart. Besides, empirical evidence abounds. They are realities in every society. The Naga society is no exception.

No matter how hard we try to push them into

the darkest corner of our minds and cupboards, the problem exists, and one will have to open one's eyes from the core of the heart to see it. And because battery against women and domestic violence exist in large scale in our society, it is POLITICAL.

It is also PERSONAL because I am a woman
(Preface.n.p.).

In her second book of poems she declares:

Yes, I believe that poetry, as also all other forms of literature, music and fine arts, are chronicles / chroniclers of events, customs, traditions and the entirety of human existence, make the history of any society. Hence this volume seeks to present a part of our history in the form of poetry, through the prism of poetry
(Monsoon Mourning i).

Sanjay Hazarika forewording her collection entitled Monsoon Mourning (2007) reveals Monalisa's subjects, identities and concerns :

Monalisa is a person of many identities : she is Naga and also of Assam. She is an editor and writer, a poet and an activist, a feminist and a manager, a wife and a mother, a child of her parents, favourite niece of aunts and uncles, and a friend to many. She is also an extremely courageous person, who has spoken out for her beliefs without fear or favour and in turn been given the great honor of being attacked for these convictions by those who do not believe either in the freedom of expression or the right of individuals to hold their own political views, which may not agree either with the majority or a noisy minority which tries to pass itself off as representative of public opinion on one issue or another. ...

From the Brahmaputra's powerful presence to the tragedy of her home state and people, to not-so tongue-in-cheek flippancy about mantris and babus and the acute sadness of violence and the pollution of those espousing violence and control, whether in government or out of it, whether in uniform or out of it. And significantly, much of her reflection is on these elements of death and bitterness of the daily trauma of life in her state and the people she knows and those she does not know (iii-v).

Monalisa raises the basic question about inequality and sexual discrimination in society and against the atrocity of patriarchy which exploits the weakness and innocence of the fairsex and shatters their liberty, peace, prosperity and right to live independently at par with the males. She puts the rhetoric question seeking justice for the eternally oppressed, exploited and dominated women class :

*If god made man
In His own Image,
Where shall the
Battered seek Justice?* (Weapons of Words ... 1)

She is confident of the victory of the oppressed, and she has convictions that the dominant has not really "won wars" in the conflict of power relations. So the "masculine hands / raising blows on bodies / soft and feminine / to me," "are battles lost" (2). She exposes the maladies of women :

*Dowryless Brides
Penny-less Wives, and
Sonless Mothers
have their destinies written
on invisible
tongues of flames* (3).

The age-old predicaments, insecurities and sufferings of the women class speak not of their "inadequacies"; on the other hand Man's violence, his dominance and all his atrocities on Woman prove his "inadequacies" :

*Man's Inadequacies
and Insecurities
speak in the
Language of Violence (4).*

Monalisa depicts the varieties of predicaments of women. She feels that it is patriarchy and its age-old devilry that has violated all norms of the society to safeguard the status and positions of women. In spite of her outcast condition she pivots the life-force and has been the source of solace, love, inspiration, sanctity and security for every human. A man's dominance and aggression on woman is mere his "inadequacy", immaturity and incapability to propitiate the violent satanic evil force of destroying the beautiful creation / ecology. So the poet airs her feelings :

*In bodies battered, bruised and bent
Live unbroken spirits,
Children call them "Mother"
Society defines them "Wives" (5).*

She further says of the "pages of pain" and the destiny of the eternally suffering women :

*Violence – induced miscarriages,
black-eyes and bloodied-lips
blue-bruises and broken ribs
within the sanctity of marriages
and security of homes,
are unrecorded indexes
of man's "progress and growth"
on this planet's unwritten
pages of pain (7).*

Pain came with the loss of Eden. "Eden is a recurrent motif in Western Culture" (Kerridge 539). Similarly for ecofeminists it is the ecology/environment and the culture related to it, which is like Eden. The ecofeminists are like theological monists. The dualistic vision of transcendence and mastery brings about chaos and turmoil. So the ecofeminists plead for the preservation of ecology on a principle of "monism". Monalisa sounds her monism in her quest for her "Love" in her environment.

*I've reached / for the sky / swam in oceans /
counted the stars / walked on / desert sands /
tried to touch the rainbows /
over snow-capped mountains / peeped into /
every hole on the fields / looked behind every /
pillar and tree / even tried to /
embrace the world / you see ...
I searched for you (31).*

The poet's ecological concerns intensify in her recent book entitled *Monsoon Mourning* (2007). Rapid changes in the ecology of Nagaland, and the places around the Northeast India have evoked deep concerns and bitter reactions in her mind. The suffering of the tribes, the environmental degradation, degeneration and the erosion of bio-diversity, extinction of the rare flora and fauna and the impact of the ecological inequilibrium on the human habitat and living conditions have been recurrent provocations in the poet to air her reactions about the ecological degeneration and its predicaments :

*Yes, I've seen our rice fields
turn into factories and mills
our green hills
reduced to barren brown
our rivers have dried
and our once sparkling fish
lie dead on sandy banks.
It's no more the Pines I can smell
nor hear the Tragopan and the Hornbill,*

*You tell me we are advancing rapidly
into the 21st century
and never fail to mention
that you brought
progress to our tribes.
But I wonder why you remain silent
When we say we are hungry (29).*

Monalisa protests against the injustice done to the Nagas. The tribes who are integral to nature / ecology are the embodiment of all graces of nature. But they are humiliated for not being accorded the right status nor allowed to enjoy their rights :

*Brushing aside all arguments
You made us a part of the Nation
only acknowledging our existence
in hyperbole and rhetoric
with reference to the 'special status'
immuring us in a 'category'
to be preserved and promoted
for anthropological studies
within shaven hills and rare orchids
in pursuance of your "tryst with destiny".
But first you must tell me why do you concede
and glorify self-immolations in protest against
half a handful of jobs and reservations
in matters of national governance? (30).*

Against the monist principle of "world and its creatures" being considered "one organic body" (Kerridge 539), there also exists dualisms in Monalisa's sense of ecology. She speaks of the Naga insurgency where she reveals the nature/culture, reason/nature, mind/ body dualisms :

*Don't waste your time
laying down diktats
and guidelines
on how to conduct my life
on matters personal and political.
You may not know
for you do not know
beyond the AK-47
and so you survive.
But I am more
and a mere machine
or a mass of molecules (31).*

In the section "Nature Reflections" and in the poem, "Mist over Brahmaputra", she announces her love of natural environment and her passion to be in the midst of serene bio-diversity. The cool, soothing wind brings to her soul a Wordsworthian mysticism/ pantheism, a Keatsian sensuousness and a vigorous Shelleyan passion to be blown away by the violent West Wind :

*If you have been the waters of a
mountain lake dance to / the songs of
the wooing winds / you have lived well. /
And we could be friends, for you would not ask/
for the barren Moon, or for mundane middle*

class *miseries*
(39).

Her passionate impulse is flowered further through the vernal showers :

*If I should ever / pour on you /
like vernal showers, / will you,
my parched earth, / let me wash away /
Your fears and fatigue, / hold me for ever/
in the corners and crevices / of your core /
and let me / cascade gently / into the contours /
of your consciousness? (41).*

Her poem "Mist Over Brahmaputra" unravels the great river's "spiritual serenity" and the distortion of this spiritual serenity by the "human inadequacies" (4). The title "Mist over Brahmaputra" is ambivalent announcing the predicaments of human conditions in the post-modern and post-colonial era and the poet's ecofeminist stand to expose the patriarchal dominance over the serene feminine graces and spirituality:

*From the silence of my
air-conditioned hotel room
I flow with the currents
and coherence of Brahma's son,
sometimes filthy with human inadequacies,
other times chaste in spiritual serenity.
And in moments such as these*

*I will myself to breathe
the perseverance of Brahma's son
and disintegrate
into the shapes, colours and volume
of water-untouched and unscarred
by time, space and the elements (ibidem).*

Monalisa Changkija as an ecofeminist follows both the western and Indian principles of pleading for the preservation of nature and culture. As a lover of serene ecology, she speaks of social ecology, literary ecology, cultural ecology, romantic ecology and the typical landscape/ecology of Nagaland/Assam. She pleads for the upliftment of mankind by maintaining the bio-diversity properly. The two ways for transforming and maintaining a harmonious relationship with our physical and social environment, i.e., by the ecofeminism and by the western mode of development with totalizing tendencies and also an alternative model of development that allows for the rhythm and movements of human life in accordance with nature as advocated by Indra Nath Choudhury (176-7) are truly reflected in the poetry of Monalisa. She believes in both the traditional mystical treatment of nature and post-modern theoretical application of ecofeminism as instruments for checking the contemporary ecological crisis.



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A SLICE OF LIFE

* Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman

After having done a term of three months in the jail, Subir, coming out into the sunshine of freedom, was disappointed at not seeing his elder brother, Samir and his niece, Archana waiting outside the gate to receive him. He stifled a deep sigh and consoled himself by thinking that his elder brother and his niece had not come over because of the embarrassment associated with the jailing of a dear and near one. But he had been jailed in a noble cause. There was no point in waiting for them any longer, he thought. They won't come. Quite dejected, Subir started walking home; his house was not a long distance from the jail. While walking, he sensed people going their way past him, staring curiously at him. In this small village people knew one another, particularly Subir because he was a good football-player and had played in many tournaments. But he did not feel shame at their staring at his face; they knew why he had been sent into the jail.

When he arrived home he saw Samir sitting on a chair on the terrace, talking to Archana and Baudi, Archana's mother on his two sides. They were so absorbed they could not notice Subir. Subir coughed out loud. Samir, Archana and Baudi stopped talking and looked at him. Archana and Baudi pelted away, Archana into her study room and Baudi into the kitchen, as if he were an outsider intruding into the intimacy of their conversation and the household privacy.

'Why are you standing outside the gate?' Samir said in a nonchalant tone.

Archana and Baudi's behaviour and his nonchalant tone flung Subir bewildered and perplexed. At that instant the pride he had nurtured while rotting in the jail got reduced to meaninglessness.

'Why are you still standing outside the gate?' Samir asked once again, his stare fastened on his face.

Subir walked through the gate inside and got on the ter-

'What has happened to Baudi and Archana, Dada? He asked Samir, staring full into his face. 'They've gone away, seeing me! You know, Dada I courted imprisonment....'

Samir interrupted him. 'Nothing has happened to them', he hummed and hawed and stopped, fumbling about for words, then continued, 'I was stuck up with important work so I could not go down to the jail to receive you.'

The expression that had still clung about his face belied him. Subir understood Samir said this to parry the question. Samir coughed his hesitancy out, then added, 'Your Baudi has cooked since the morning the items of food that you relish.'

Baudi has cooked since the morning the items of food I relish! The cloud of gloominess slid away off Subir's face. I've misunderstood them, he thought... But why did they go away into the study room and the kitchen, instead of greeting me?

'What are you thinking Subir?' Samir's voice broke his trance. 'The day has already deepened. Change your dress and have bath!'

Subir shuffled into his room, mentally trying to solve the riddle of Archana's sliding away into her room, seeing him.

At the dinner Baudi did really serve on his saucer the items of food he relished. Dada was eating by him. But Archana was not eating with them. It was quite unlike Archana not to do so; she always loved eating with him. 'Archana is not eating with us!' he said, staring round at Samir.

An uneasy expression manifested itself on Samir's face. 'She has already eaten her dinner', he stuttered.

'But she loved eating with me before I went into the jail', Subir said, his eyes glued in a fixed stare on his face. Samir's face clouded over and Baudi was unnecessarily fiddling with cooking utensils.

'Maybe she was in a hurry'. Samir squeaked and stopped, fumbling about for words, then continued. 'Forget about Archana's not eating with you. I have something important to talk to you about. Come to my room after the dinner!'

Subir got curious. 'What's the important thing you want to talk about?' Subir asked. 'Why not tell me this now?'

'We had rather talk it about in the silence of my room', Samir said. Baudi was still fiddling with the cooking utensils, staring away.. 'Go on eating, peacefully!'

Subir resumed eating but the curiosity still persisted. Maybe Atin often teased Archana during my absence, he thought. Maybe Dada wants to talk to me about it. He stopped eating and stared round at Samir who was eating uneasily. 'Did Atin tease Arati?' he asked.

'I told you that I would talk to you in my room!' Samir said, his voice sounding angry. 'Don't disturb me eating!'

When Subir strode into Samir's room he saw him sitting on his bed, puffing at a cigarette. Seeing Subir, Samir threw the cigarette out through the window at his back and motioned to Subir to come over and sit on a chair by the bed. Subir sat on the chair indicated.

'What do you want to talk about with me, Dada? Subir asked.

Samir did not reply forthwith. He let minutes pass by to gather together the words he had thought to use. His eyes suddenly fell on the window facing him and saw a shadow flitting across it. Subir also noticed it, following Samir's stare and understood that Baudi was standing outside to eavesdrop on their conversation. 'Why didn't Baudi come inside to participate in the conversation? he wondered. What Dada wanted to talk about might not be related to the teasing by Atin, something else! Subir thought and revved himself up to listen to what Dada would say.

Samir coughed out his hesitance. 'Do not misunderstand me', he began and stopped, fumbling.

'What do I not misunderstand you about?' Subir flared up. His curiosity had already reached the bursting point.

'You know I have a daughter, our only child, to give in marriage,' Samir said, staring full into Subir's face. He was not accustomed to Subir losing patience. 'Since you stabbed and

social miscreant. You know I had chosen a youth from a well-to-do family as husband for Archana and his parents had agreed to the marriage. They cancelled the proposal on hearing that you had been sentenced to imprisonment for having stabbed a youth in retaliation.'

Subir understood what Samir was driving at and why the shadow of his Baudi had flitted across the window. 'You yourself know, Dada, it's not true,' he twanged. 'I had stabbed Atin, a social miscreant, to prevent him kidnapping Archana.'

'I know', Samir said. 'But I can't prevent people saying around you that you are a social miscreant'.

'You can't', Subir mocked. 'At least you could have told the father of the youth you had picked on that you and other witnesses had deposed falsely in the court that though I had stabbed Atin to rescue Archana, I had retaliated my enmity upon him. Surprisingly, it was Atin who had said that there had been no enmity between him and me. Because of his statement the judge had sentenced me to the three-months imprisonment. I had not borne any grudge against you; you had deposed falsely, thinking of Archana's future'.

Samir hung his head down. Subir fastened his stare upon his face. Suddenly they heard a cough outside the window. Samir raised his head up. Subir got to understand how Baudi had henpecked Dada. Dada was a teacher at a higher secondary school. He had taken on teaching as a profession but not as an ideal.

'I know you had stabbed Atin to rescue Archana', Samir hummed and hawed. 'But I can't make people believe me'. He stopped, fumbling. He stared across at the window. There was a toing and froing of the shadow outside the window. 'As long as you stay in the house', he continued, 'no one will dare come to propose for Archana. As I have told you, people are thinking of you as a social miscreant'.

Subir felt as if the earth had slipped away from below his feet. Dada wants me to leave the house so that Archana can be

Atin stab him. He had prized his life more than the molestation of his own daughter. But I had staked my own life to rescue my niece and courted imprisonment. She now hated me. It is not possible for me to live here under their stare of hatred. Though he had not looked up, he sensed Samir's eyes glued in a fixed stare upon his face. He rose to his feet.

'I don't want Archana be not given in marriage because of my staying in this house!' he said, introducing a note of determination into his voice. 'I'm going away!'

'I did not tell you to go away today!' Samir squeaked. 'Stay here a few days. Find a room in another house to rent and move there. I shall give you some money monthly'.

A mocking smile flitted across Subir's face. 'Thank you', he said. 'I can get a room on rent through the help of my friends and cater to the needs of my belly through private tuition'.

Saying this he bolted out of the house on to the road. He had not looked right and left. He was heading towards the club to request his friends to find him a room on rent. The club was not a long distance from his house. The sun had already slanted down the western horizon.

When he reached the club, he saw his friends playing at carrom and cards. But no one greeted him or said anything. They behaved as if they did not know him, as if he had intruded into the intimate atmosphere that had prevailed around them. Subir felt that an expression of uneasiness manifested itself on their faces the moment he had entered the club. The secretary, Babul was watching the play and looking askance at Subir. Subir heaved a deep sigh. He left the house, believing that his friends would help him. But on coming to the club, he confronted the harsh reality that his friends had already alienated themselves from him. He had nowhere to go. He felt like leaving the club, but where to? He would have a last try. He walked over to where Babul was standing. Maybe he would help him. He was quite educated.

'I have something important to talk to you about, Babulda', he began. Babul pressed his finger to his lips and beckoned at him to follow him into his room. Subir did his bidding.

Babul sat on his chair and motioned to Subir to sit on a chair facing him and Subir sat on it'.

'We've already got to know you were released from the jail this morning', Babul said without preamble. 'What do you want to talk to me about?'

'Could you help me find a room to rent, just now?' Subir said..

'Just now'! Babul exclaimed, quite bamboozled. 'What about your own house?'

'Dada said if I stayed on in the house it would not be possible for him to give Archana in marriage!' Subir said. 'I've come out from our house for ever. If you try it will not be difficult for me to get a room easily. Please help me!'

Babul kept silent.

'Why are you silent?' Subir said.

'Your own brother did not want to keep you in his house', Babul said. 'Why other people would rent you a room in their houses? They also have daughters to marry'.

'You yourself know', Subir began, but was rudely interrupted.

'We know everything, Subir, Babul said. 'I'm afraid I can't help you. No one in the club approved of the way you had stabbed Atin. No one wants you to remain a member of the club.'

Subir looked disappointed and chagrined. 'Were Archana your niece what would you have done, Babulda?'

A mocking smile passed through Babul's face. 'Atin would never dare touch my niece or sister, let alone kidnap her', he said. 'Archana is not a cleansed basil leaf'.

Subir flared up at such insinuation about Archana, but somehow restrained himself, for he remembered how she had behaved. Besides, there was no point in arguing with Babulda. No one would help him. He got to his feet, dejected.

'Please do not misunderstand me, Subir', Babul said, softening his voice. 'In course of time you will get the proof of what I have said about your niece'. He paused, then added, 'I have a simple question to ask you, if you do not mind'.

'Your father built your house, didn't he?' Babul said, staring full into Subir's face.

'Yes, he did', Subir said.

'Did he will his whole property to your elder brother?' Babul once again asked.

'No', Subir said, his face lighted up. 'I have a share to my father's property'.

'Why do not you demand your share from your elder brother?' Babul suggested.

'A broad smile of gratitude broke upon Subir's face. 'Thank you, Babulda, for reminding me of what I had forgotten', he said. I shall go back home and demand my share from Dada. If he doesn't want to give me my share, would you help me, Babulda'?

Babul nodded his head.

When he came out from the club, the sun had dipped to the western horizon. Its departing glow lingered across the sky. The earth was not deprived of the share of the glow. Subir was treading along the half-darkened path back home.

On his way back home, his eyes fell on a restaurant. Seeing the restaurant he felt himself gripped with hunger. He had only a few rupees in his pocket. The jail authorities had returned the amount deposited with them. He entered the restaurant. The manager welcomed him with a finely-tuned sensibility and shouted at other employees to entertain him. Other eaters at the restaurant stopped gossiping and looked frightened. They were eating away at the items of food they had almost half-eaten. An employee came running to Subir and gentled him into a chair by an empty table. The employee ran to the kitchen, without waiting for Subir to order anything. Subir was wondering why the employee had not taken his order. He was so nonplussed at the overdone and superfluous reception that he could not notice the two eyes riveted on him from a corner. After a short while the employee came back from the kitchen and placed on his table a big saucer containing Biriani and Meat. Subir looked up surprised at the employee.

'I didn't order you Biriani and Meat!' he said. 'I would have ordered Moglai Parota'.

'Please eat off Biriani and Meat, Subirda', the employee said in a quavering voice. 'I shall bring you Moglai Parota'.

'I don't need Moglai Parota any more', Subir said.

'Have you got angry with me, Subirda?' the employee quavered.

Subir got exasperated. 'Why should I?' he said. 'Go, look after the needs of other customers!. I shall call you when I need.

The employee pelted away from him, greatly relieved.

Subir was bolting the Biriani and Meat. He knew his entry into the restaurant had vitiated the atmosphere. His stabbing to Atin and going into the jail had made people fear of him. The undue reception accorded to him by the manager and the employee had testified to it.

He had eaten off the Biriani and Meat as quickly as possible. He got to his feet and walked over to the cash counter. As soon as he thrust his hand into his pocket the manager folded his hands. 'You need not pay anything,' he said. Subir flared up. 'Why should I not pay anything?' he shrieked. 'Do you think I am a miscreant living on your dole? If you'... He stopped, as he felt the touch of a hand on his shoulder. He swung round and saw Atin standing before him, smiling. He could not control his anger: it was Atin who had catapulted him into this condition. He rolled his right hand fingers into a fist and jabbed it into Atin's face. Atin had been prepared for such a blow and moved aside. Subir could not restrain himself and fell forward on to a nearby table. Other eaters screamed and ran pell-mell out of the restaurant. The employees stood on, trembling. The manager took up the receiver of the telephone to call the police. Atin signed at the manager not to call. The manager put down the receiver. He could not dare disobey Atin.

Subir, though injured, was waiting for Atin's reprisal. But to his surprise, Atin heaved him gently to his feet and gentled him into a chair beside the table and he himself sat on another chair by him.

'Have you been much injured, Subir?' Atin asked in a soft

heaved him to his feet and helped him into a chair. 'I have not been much injured', Subir said, 'and I don't bother about the injury. What has really surprised me is the way you have behaved, in spite of my intention to injure you by delivering a blow on your face. I stabbed you to rescue Archana and hospitalized you!'

A smile broke upon Atin's face. 'Had you, as I did, tried to kidnap my niece I myself would have stabbed you, to be sure'.

Subir stared at his face, quite puzzled. 'I could not understand what you meant to say!' he squeaked.

'I and Archana love each other', Atin said. 'We had ourselves planned to elope. You know your elder brother had already selected a youth for Archana. We had no other way. You yourself did foil our attempt to elope'.

Subir's surprise knew no bounds. Now he understood why Archana had looked disdainful at him and avoided him. He had prevented them from eloping. Then and there he remembered his conversation with Babul.

'Did Babulda, secretary of the club, know of your plan?' he asked.

'At first he did not know about our plan,' Atin replied. 'When he went over to the hospital and asked me why I had tried to kidnap Archana, I confided our plan to him.'

He paused for a while, fumbling about for words, then continued. 'Your Dada also did go over there to request me to depose in the court that you had stabbed me in retaliation, and had inculcated upon the witnesses the fear of me so as to prevail upon them to depose against you'.

'But you deposed in the court that you had attempted to kidnap Archana, because she had refused your proposal to marry you!' Subir said, quite surprised. 'Love makes man great'.

'Night has deepened', Atin said, staring round the restaurant. 'Manager and other employees are looking at us with a request to leave the restaurant. 'It's time we should go home. Please forget what occurred between you and me'.

'I have no home to go', Subir said. 'I have left the house, because Dada told me that if I stay in our house, Archana could not be given in marriage'.

He did not tell him that he had been going home to demand the portion of his parental property from his elder brother. He won't stand his elder brother any more, for he had stooped so low.

Atin's face broke into a broad smile. 'I'm living alone in a rented room. Please come and stay with me'.

'Who has rented you a room in his house?' Subir asked, being surprised. '

A childless couple has rented me a room', Atin said smiling 'They have no daughter to give in marriage. Besides, my staying in their house serves to shield them from unwanted intrusion. We shall live together. I desperately need a companion'.

Subir thought for a while, then said, 'I shall gladly stay with you. Besides, I shall atone for the wrong I have done to you and Archana. It will be my endeavour from now on to get Archana married to you'.

In an exuberance of delight Atin embraced Subir.

They both walked out of the restaurant, forgetting to pay the bill. The manager and the other employees heaved, in unison, a sigh of relief. □

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COMPASSION

* Dr. P. Raja
Pondicherry, India

How that little creature found its way into the bucket, half-filled with water continued to be a mystery to me. Perhaps it was thirsty and in trying to lick the droplets of water sleeping on the edge of the bucket, the mouse slipped and fell into it. Or was it fate that drew it to the container? I have no answer. Who can ever understand the vagaries of fate!

An hour or so ago, the mouse had the entire world to roam about and feel at home. But now, its world was narrowed down to a bucket, and its freedom curtailed.

It was not yet dawn, when I awoke to some scarping sound. With the heaviness of sleep still in my eyes I cocked up my sharp ears. My detective mind sent signals to every nook and cranny of the entire room and soon found out that the sound came from somewhere nearby. I sharpened my left ear, and pulled the torch light from under my pillow, all in utter silence.

When I ascertained myself that the noise came from just under my bed. I flashed the torch and found the trouble-maker.

It was a mouse trying to eat away a leg of my cot.

The scarping sound came to a sudden halt. The mouse, as if hypnotized by the light, stood blinking with its little red eyes and its wee whiskers glistening.

For a moment I too felt that I was hypnotized by that inert little creature. And when I came back to myself, the mouse was gone.

A mouse in my house! A creature to be dreaded. One is worth a battalion and I couldn't imagine the fate that awaited my books assiduously collected over the years and stored for my use and for my interested friends as well.

Years ago, a mouse couple had been welcome guests in my study. I didn't bother them since they didn't in any way trouble me. They developed their family in geometric proportions. My wife grumbled when she swept clean the turds off my study, twitching

and fending off her nose at the waste those little animals had deposited.

I was no stranger to squeaks and so my wife's grumble passed for yet another squeak. To see my wife slap her forehead as a mark of helplessness was a common sight in those days.

I had not mind to drive away the mice family. What right have I to deny them of their right to stay anywhere in the world!

"All of us, including the family of mice, are only sojourners on this earth", I said philosophically, and saw my wife pull a long face and disappear into the kitchen.

My intimate friends and close colleagues, mostly book-lovers, cherished my friendship - for I lent them even the rarest of books without any grudge, on condition that they returned them in time and intact.

Books are after all meant to be read. And by lending books, I do their authors a great service... more number of people read them. I want everyone to follow my principle for I am also an author.

Coming back to the mice family... Oh! I have learnt to live with them in my study, regardless of the noise they made now and then, and the nuisance they created here and there.

But when they wanted to have a taste of my books I decided to do away with them.

Many a time I have seen my mice hopping over the edges of my books that stood vertically on the shelves. I have seen a trio stretching conveniently and sleeping on the *Encyclopaedia of Dreams*, kept horizontally on the reference shelf. On another occasion I saw a couple quarreling over Heaven-knows-what on my *Legal Encyclopaedia*.

No doubt, I delighted my eyes on their life drama. And one day I thanked them profusely when three of my poems, all inspired by them, appeared in an American journal and made me richer by a few dollars.

One Sunday morning I incurred the wrath of my wife. Now and again I did one thing or another to infuriate her, for she looked more beautiful than ever in that mood. But on that day it was not

"You can't have both... your books and your mice...choose between the two", shouted my wife fuming.

I pretended to blink though in my heart of hearts I was pleased to see her howl like that.

"What is that owl-like look for?" she yelled. "Be an owl and eat away all your mice, before they eat away your books".

Startled I inquired into the matter.

"Hm... The unwanted has happened. Why don't you walk into your study and find for yourself?" she said, arching her eyebrows.

I scurried into my study and there I had the shock of my life.

Shreds of paper collected from underneath the bookshelves kept staring at me.

I bent down to have a closer look at the pile. Then picking up a shred. I looked inquisitively at it.

The colour of the paper and the tiny letters printed on it looked quite familiar. "From what book is that?" I asked myself, and sat on my haunches.

I tried to read the half-eaten words found in the shred but couldn't make any head or tail of it.

I picked up another shred, slightly bigger than the rest in the pile. Luckily two short lines were intact.

The first line read: "What are you reading, my lord?" And the second read: "Words, words, words".

I jumped for joy and cried "oh! It's Polonius and Hamlet speaking".

The next minute my joy disappeared and gave rise to sorrow. "Huh! My **Complete Works of Shakespeare** edited by Peter Alexander is gone", I screamed.

"Now stop screaming awhile and look at those books I have piled up there, near your writing desk", said my wife over my shoulder, her hand pointing at the direction.

One quick jump. And the pile was at hand. I flipped open a few of them one after the other and found to my dismay that most of the pages in every one of them were gone and the pages

I turned pale. "Look at what these nasty mice have done to my twenty-volume edition of **The Arabian Nights**. These books are rare, you know. They are in Sir Richard Burton's translation". I cried.

"Now decide," said my wife authoritatively, "Your books or your mice".

"Definitely my books", I roared. "I'll buy a mousetrap today and see that they are all gone".

"That's none of your botheration. Leave that to me," said my wife, carrying the dustbin away.

The next morning I entered my study to write an elegy on the untimely death of my Shakespeare and Burton. But...but...

"Hei! What are these black and fluffy little things lying on the floor?" I yelled calling the attention of my wife busy with the washing machine.

At first I mistook them for lush cobwebs fallen from the loft. But at close quarters I found that they were all lifeless bodies of the mice, my one-time study mates but now my arch-enemies.

"Oh, my god! It looks like a battlefield. All the villains of my study lie vanquished here. Who has performed this miracle?" I asked.

"Raticide" said my wife entering my study with a long-handled broom in one hand and a plastic bin in the other. For a moment she looked like a cold-blooded warrior.

"Don't ever think of having mice as your pets again," she said taking a carcass by its tail and throwing it into the bin that began to gulp down the dead mice.

"Twenty three," said my wife.

"So many! So many in my little study!" I said opening my eyes widely.

"Wait for the grand total...I do not know how many more are lying dead on the loft. There may be some beneath the bookcases and one or two behind them. I'll have to sweep clean your entire study before I give you the exact figure of the dead".

I stood appreciating my duty-conscious wife.

"If you happen to see a live mouse again, don't fail to tell me. I know how much of your money and energy you have spent in making your study what it is today. Don't ever again lose your books to the rats," she warned.

I nodded my head in approval, patting on her shoulder affectionately.

It took several years for me after that crusade on rats to see a mouse again - the mouse that disturbed my sleep but managed its escape.

I remembered my wife's warning and attempted to tell her of the new invader. But my words got strangled in my throat for my wife was not there to hear my complaint.

Jammed between board and glass, she lives in the garlanded photograph on the wall, just above the entrance of my study.

That was why I dreaded the mouse. The creature had set me into thinking all the time about it. "How am I going to dispose it off?" I asked myself repeatedly, still stretched on my lonely bed.

It was only when my mind was struggling to find an answer I saw the mouse in the bucket.

Who did the thinking for me, I do not know.

I sat on my haunches and looked into the bucket.

The mouse was still struggling for its release and I was sure that it could not escape, unless a saviour came to its timely rescue.

Keeping its snout a little above the surface of water, it floated vertically all the time kicking its legs against the water and producing a gleaming circle of ripples. I saw it going down when it became tired and remained motionless. And when water entered its nostrils, it struggled for breath and started kicking once again to reach the surface for a whiff of air.

As I mercilessly watched the mouse struggle with death, the creature looked at me direct into my eyes. It brought its fore-legs together now and again. It looked as if it were praying for my mercy. Its eyes seemed to tell me that it had already suffered enough for entering my house and that capital punishment was

As I had not yet lost all compassion for the mouse clan, I rushed into the kitchen and searched for the tongs, with the help of which I could catch the mouse by its neck and carry it to the street and there let it go free... after a strict warning, of course.

But the tongs were playing hide and seek with me and I had to think of another way.

Finding no other alternative, I decided to carry the bucket to the street and splash the water and along with that the mouse on the road.

"Well! Life is short for all creatures on earth. Why should I shorten it further for the mouse in the bucket?" so saying I rushed back to the yard.

I was late...perhaps too late. □

BIRTHMARK

* *Madhukant Kalpit*

Kali was standing on the threshold to prick a pimple. She rubbed the misty mirror on her rear and held it before her eyes. There was not an inch of the mirror where she could see her face clearly. Shifting the mirror a little hither and thither she steadied her gaze at a hazy spot. A faint reflection of her face emerged. Kali looked at her face with the surprise of one who rarely gets to see her face. From her eyes, lips, cheeks, her gaze halted at her pimple. She blushed inwardly. "How the pimple adds to your beauty"! It made her shy. With her fingers she tapped on the pimple twice, thrice, as if she were knocking at the door. Then stroking the pimple with her fingers she became lost in far-away thoughts and she didn't realize when her gaze escaped the mirror.

She was startled by the cow-buffalo's bellowing. A wide shady neem tree stood in the courtyard and in the adjacent en-

there were two enormously tall tamarind trees. It was in their shade that they always tied the cattle. The cow-buffalo was tied to the peg. The other pegs were vacant. A cacti hedge which began from here and ended at a forked path; one leading to the village, the other to the woods. Buffaloes which had lay soaking in the lake came rushing and tossing their heads as they turned into the lower vas. Kali's eyes were dazzled by the sun's silvery reflection on the mud-soiled backs of the creatures.

Kali adjusted the mirror in her hand. She propped up her cheek with her tongue and squeezed out the pimple from its root sending forth a little blood streaked with pus. She bent down to wipe the pimple with her petticoat. Her eyes caught her reflection in the mirror. She was tempted to gaze uninterruptedly at her bursting youth. Lowering and raising the mirror in turns she observed herself below the neck.

"What are you doing *chhodi*?" someone called out unexpectedly. Pressing the mirror to her chest with her palms she shot a bewildered look at Ramtudo. There was coyness in her eyes, a cunning smile playing at the corners of his mouth.

The courtyard was empty. All big and small were away at work in the woods. Nothing except the hiss of desolateness could be heard. The courtyard stirred to life only in the evening when the farm-hands returned.

"Is Harji at home?" Ramtudo asked with chinky eyes and resting his sickle against the pillar he sat hoisted on his feet puffing a *beedi*.

"Do you have some work with him?" Kali barely managed to ask. Sensing his eyes on her she scurried into the house. Taking her *odhni* from the clotheshorse she covered her chest and emerged once again.

"I have lots of work with him but...." Ramtudo snubbed out his *beedi* under his shoe. The pleats of his *dhoti* were flung by the swing of his foot. Kali quickly looked away.

On the opposite side were houses in a row. The ones with tin roofs looked like a band of rust. The ones with tiled roofs were covered with thorny twigs to prevent damage by monkeys.

mud houses were merely thatched. The line proceeded jaggedly and created a strange pattern. An undesirable fear was giving Kali the jitters. Crows on the tamarind tree took flight and settled noisily on the neem tree. *Craw . . . c . . . r . . . a . . w . . .* The branch of the neem bent under the impact and started to wave. One of the crows took position on the cow-buffalo's neck She shook her neck and the crow was hurled from one side to another. Once the crow started to peck at the callus on her neck she stood with closed eyes at her meekest best. Kali felt like pelting a stone.

Ramtudo lit another *beedi*. Kali's anxiety knew no bounds. Last year's memory was still vivid in her mind. At this very time of the year Ramtudo had come home. Night had settled and it was quite dark with faint yellow light from the lantern hung in the verandah. On the dilapidated cot below sat Bapuji coughing, his knees shoved into his chest. Opposite to him on the floor sat Ramtudo resting his elbow on his knee and probing his ear with a broken matchstick. "The seedlings have to be picked. Hariji, you'll have to arrange for a farm-hand for me...." Leaving the sentence unfinished Ramtudo threw the stick away inserted his finger in his ear and moved it in a circulatory motion. His head moved too and it loosened his turban. He removed it and placed it on his knee. Then scratching his overgrown beard he stared at Harji and said, "You'll have to send Kali tomorrow to pick the seedlings, do you hear?"

Harji well knew Ramtudo was bullying him on the strength of his master. The *mukhi* was an irritable sort. Moreover, how was one to refuse an old customer? Notwithstanding, Harji tried to defend himself. "How is she to cover all that distance alone on her way back? And you know how chicken-hearted she is!" Harji was interrupted by a coughing bout.

Her father's remarks had made Kali laugh to herself. Smiling shyly she stood up to fetch water. After offering water to Ramtudo, she started to soothingly stroke her father's back working like bellows.

Ramtudo wore his turban and responded with a sour face, "The job will be over by two thirty in the noon. Eko will be coming

the station. Where is the problem now?" Bapuji had assented half-heartedly.

Come morning and farm-hands would converge at the entrance of the *vas* as if at a fair. With bundles of food and cradles on head they would, with heaving steps, walk through the *neliyu*. The *neliyu* would overflow with haste and commotion. Inside the house Kali stood near the pot and swiftly gulped down water". No sooner had she emerged from the house wiping her mouth with the back of her palm than Bapuji reminded her, "The seedling farm is at Ramwadi, near the borewell. Watch your step. If you are careless someone will get a chance to rebuke you."

"Very well....." Kali's voice travelled the distance in the air. Kali wasn't completely naive. Once when she was a little girl, the border of her *odhni* had touched Narsangbha while walking in the village. The man had a fiery temper. "Which blind ass of a female is it?" saying so he let fly a staggering slap. It had upset her oil container and all the oil has spilt. She went home wailing and asked Bapuji, "Bapa, wasn't Narsangbha polluted when he slapped me?"

To her surprise Bapuji was enraged, "You have got a long tongue, *chhodi*. They are higher in caste than us and are polluted by our touch."

It was beyond Kali's comprehension. In moments of leisure she would strain her mind to go to the root of the matter. She would recall small incidents and big. It happened once that Ramtuji had climbed up a high table and was winnowing wheat. Kali was hastily filling the winnowing baskets one by one and handing them over to him. While returning the empty basket in haste Ramtuji's hand touched hers. To make the matter worse, the *mukhi* noticed it. His anger boiled over, "*Chhodi*, how can you be so careless that you let your hand touch his without realizing it?" Afterwards he had brought water in a *lota* and sprinkled it on Ramtuji to purify him much to the latter's abashment. Later when the *mukhi* had gone to the shed to smoke the *challam*, Ramtuji had abused him to his heart's content. It made Kali think, "Looks like Ramtuji is a

Still immersed in thought Kali reached the borewell. She peeped into the water basin nearby. The reflection of her face was stretched lengthwise and breadthwise as it swayed. She picked up a small pebble and threw it in. It made the little frogs swimming on the surface disappear under the water. The pebble sank at the bottom. Then walking along the periphery of fields Kali reached the seedling farm.

Ramtudo was busy in the seedling-bed. Kali joined him. Both continued to work without a word. When they had managed to pick a considerable quantity, Ramtudo said, "Go and put them away in the borewell room. Cover them with a gunny sack otherwise they'll wither."

Kali rose and Ramtudo started to pile them in her arms. Kali felt a slight hesitation. "You sit at ease. I shall collect the bundles of seedlings myself. You've touched me umpteen times by now". She laughed.

"Aren't you silly to be saying such things? How can one be polluted by mere touch?" Ramtuji laughed the matter away and continued to fill Kali's arms. His fingers accidentally touched Kali below the neck. "*Are, arre.....*" muttered Kali and drew out her tongue before puffing up her face and moving away.

Kali returned from the borewell room. The storm in her mind had not yet died down. Thoughts tossed about in her mind. "In public they are polluted, in private they compromise with their standards. What kind of folk are these!" the harder she thought about these things the more confused she became. She cajoled herself, "How is one to be on guard while working. Ramtudo didn't do it on purpose. He's a decent fellow otherwise...." Narsangbha's slap visited her memory.

Once again Kali squatted to work at the seedling-bed. Ramtudo was on a talking spree - his domestic problems, addictions, foul tempered wife. Kali listened as she worked, sometimes with a monosyllabic utterance of acknowledgement. The steady flow of talk was interrupted by "What's happened to your foot, *chhodi*?" She was alarmed. She looked askance at Ramtudo. His gaze was riveted upon her foot. She covered her leg with her

"It is a birthmark..." she took a long breath and continued, "I've had it from birth." Ramtudo laughed a hearty laugh. Putting the bunch aside he slipped towards her. "Let me see it properly...."

Ramtudu's eyes were swiveling. Kali stared at him. "What is there to see in a birthmark? As if it is studded with diamonds?" Unknowingly she uncovered the calf her leg.

"Having a birthmark is an auspicious sign, *chhodi!* You are very lucky". A pebble stuck in the sole of his shoe had been bothering him. He removed his shoe and banged it against the ground before slipping his foot into it again.

Kali was obsessed with the birthmark on her calf now. Her heart was full of glee. She was feeling as if on the top of the world after she had learnt that a birthmark was auspicious. "The first thing I'll do after going home today is to show my birthmark to Bapu. Mustn't he have seen it until now?" Kali was amused at herself. She regretted the fact that she did not get to know about her good fortune earlier. She found Ramtudo stroking her birthmark while she herself felt the urge to do so.

Kali felt shy and hurriedly moved her leg. "Here I am trying to prevent it, but I see your keenness growing". Kali's words fell on deaf ears for Ramtudo wasn't paying attention. Kali covered her leg with a sense of shame. A quiver ran through her body as she stood up. She collected the bundles of seedlings and crossing over the farm periphery she entered the borewell room. She lifted the gunny sack, arranged the bundles neatly and covered them again.

As she turned to step out, she found Ramtudo blocking her way. She laughed in astonishment. "Why have you come here?" she asked, to which Ramtudo did not reply. Kali inspected his face closely and found it to be fearful. She was overcome with sudden fright. Her first impulse was to leap out of the room. No sooner had she lifted her leg than she found herself stifled in Ramtudo's clasp. Kali was stunned. Out of breath with fright she began entreating, "Please let me go. Ramtuji you know you mustn't touch me...."

Ramtudu looked deep into Kali's eyes saying, "I want to see

chin with one hand. 'Is it here that one gets polluted?' Darkness fell over Kali's trembling lips. She felt suffocated. She was determined to free herself from this terrible trap. She strained her body in the opposite direction of the embrace and flung herself away. Ramtuji lost his hold. Kali ran for her life, out into the verandah and across the farm. She fell in a heap at the seedling bed. Rolling in the mud she gave a wail of anguish.

Kali would have continued to cry but she saw Ramtuji scratching his head as he walked towards her so she got up to her feet and began to run as if fleeing from a cobra.

The sun was overhead and Kali's senses were numbed. She had covered an immense distance out of fright. Her legs refused to carry her further. Overcome with giddiness she strained her eyes and could see the village houses at a distance. She felt some relief. By the time she entered the courtyard it was twilight. She flung herself carelessly like a lifeless thing on the cot in the verandah, revealing her legs up to the knees in the process.

The birthmark shone on her calf. The pain didn't stop her from smiling weakly to herself. While caressing the birthmark she felt the prick of a thorn. "You are very lucky...." Kali firmly shut her eyes.

A year went by but Kali hadn't forgotten anything. She was really upset at her naivety, her unfortunate self and with Ramtudo. She eyed the desolate courtyard. Ramtudo was sitting there laughing hoarsely. He looked at her with screwed eyes and said, "Kali, I've come to see your birthmark today...." Harrumphing ostentatiously he stood up. Kali trembled at the thought and each atom of her being was ablaze. She yelled. "Freeze where you are Ramtuji, don't take even one step forward". But Ramtuji was advancing like a mad elephant. Kali didn't trust him one bit now. And it was no use sitting quietly either. Her anxiety swelled beyond proportion. She hardly realized when she had climbed down the verandah. The sickle was flickering in her strong hold.

Her legs were energized by a strange strength. With the sickle held high she proceeded impressively. From Kali she had metamorphosed into Goddess Durga with a string of blood-dripping heads round her neck shimmering like Kali's birthmark. □

This short story is translated by Rupalee Burke.

Her Existence

** Dr. Anjana Verma*

Her Cooking skill is welcomed
Her education
where it proves to be lucrative
is welcomed
Her hard work is welcomed
Her sincerity is welcomed
Her service in every field
is welcomed
But when she wants
to open her eyes in the world
her whole existence is denied
And she is thrown into
a garbage bin! □

** teaches Hindi at Nitishwar College, Muzaffarpur, Bihar, India*

THE MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAINS

** Margaret Boles*

The mysterious mountains
have many moods,
Mystery is but one of them,
In sunshine they are faintly
blue, and far away,
As if fine weather
makes them distant,
Not needing notice,
our society superfluous,
On dark, dour, and dull days
They are grey, omnipresent
As if spying over our shoulders
They seek to see our secrets.
There are other days when

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They slip behind the curtains
that are clouds,
Seeking privacy
for their ablutions,
A relaxing, daylong bath,
Then green and clean
they do emerge,
Revitalised again,
And awesome,
inspiring in winter,
They coldly stand
against the sky. □

** Add: Dublin, Ireland.*

SABARAMATI

** Tuhinamsu Rath*

The magic
in Sabaramati's river water
Drew all the thirsty people
Did it quench their thirst?
But,
The thirst of the river
Drenched the animate and
the inanimate.
Thirst,
the resort of dappled desires
the extended apparition
and exploitation.
Some thirsty of power
Some of caste and gender
Some
of religion or community.
One day Sabaramati said,
"I am thirsty,
Can you give me water
- pure water,

- pure soul,
The purity of which
Truth will verify,
can you proclaim -
the liberty of most bonded
man?"
A shudder went down
The nerves of the frowning
folk
The power drunken murmured
"The river is not asking for
water
But fire
fire-that would burn power
and pretension
And
The essence of our existence".
By and by
The thirst of the river
changed into fire
slender became the river
Rejected, unwanted.
Thirst throttled frail-frame
The thirst-fire
Doused by power-ash
But
How can the ash
put out the fire?
One day or the other
Sabaramati will ask for
pure water
To quench the thirst
will ask for
A contented life of the
Strife - struck people
A member for the family
A family for the village
A village for the country

No power
No hypocrisy
Can put out the fire
Nor quench the thirst
Thirst -
The memento of our dream
And
The world awaits a Gandhi -
The guileless and greedless
man. □

** translated by Prasant Kr. Biswal
from 'Sosa Santak' - an anthology of
Oriya Poems*

THE RAINS

** Kiran Kumar Mishra*

Rain, Rain, go away
Little Johnny wants to play
Leave the earth hard & dry,
Rain, Rain go away.
Rain, Rain, go away
For my friends want to play
Why don't you come here
When we all go away.
For it is the time to play,
It is the time to play,
Please don't make it a rainy
day.
Rain, Rain go away
And come on a Saturday
When my class is off
And Tommy makes a paper
boat.
Rain, Rain go away
Little Tommy wants to play
Rain, Rain go away
And come with a rainbow sky.

** a student at St. Xavier School,*

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Bhubaneswar, Orissa

THE SCARE - CROW

** Hrudananda Panigrahi*

Here I am
watching crops
Alone!
Eyes, ears, nose
carved with lime.
Tattered are my limbs.
My fate, a sunken moon
in the distant sky.
Like an impotent cloud,
My 'Destiny'.

I do not know
who are scared of me
or whom I scare,
under whose tune
I dance, I know not.
This much I know:
Watching crops -
My only Job. □

** translated from Oriya by Bikash
Kumar Mohapatra.*

LET HIM FREE

** M.K. Anil Kumar*

What prevent from
making the believes simple
without temples
nor complex philosophies.
Love, kindness
and humanity
is the creed
where the God shapes.
He does not make

great monuments
or will to follow
but only good hearts.
Why do they go after
conventions
and institutions
to find Him out.
No sophistry
could help the religions
unless they
let Him free. □

** Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala*

MIRRORS

** Dr. R.R. Menon*

The world is full of mirrors,
some we see or look for, others
mere sight can hardly pierce.
A child watching its mother
faces signs that often trace
images that rebound in
space.
Lovers find each other in the
eye
reflecting romance of the sky
where stray lightnings quietly
deny.
Mirrors lurk in a hand-bag
to check up if we could gag
moods under a make-up flag.
Eyes, nose, mouth, mind or
brain,
turns reflections to entertain
or inform in a colourful chain.
Mirrors tell us truth or lie,

Some too dim-witted to notice
images, others feel they
tease,
a few see what they please.
Image, whether friend or foe,
is based on the boat you row,
or the line you need to toe.
The past holds mirror to the
present
that can, in a determined dis-
sent,
arrest an impending descent.
Reading reflections in mirrors
could be tricky, the errors
may lead up to a hall of hor-
rors.

Too much slant light can crack
or distort mirrors. Our shock,
the mirrors silently mock. □

** Add: Bangalore, Karnataka,
India.*

DREAM

** Sakti. P. Chotray*

It takes a long time
To build a dream.
It breaks so easily
Within no time.
A fractured dream
Shadows life
Making it
Terribly agonised.
Man
Chooses between
Life and Death or
Surrenders before

the Reality. □ *Rock Pebbles / July. - Dec. 08/P. 157*

** Add: Berhampur (Gm.), Oris-*

INTO THE WOODS

** Pratyush Mishra.*

In its cool hands,
I found my 'Freedom'
- the freedom of my Soul!
As I stood in its midst,
basking in all the Love,
True ... Chaste ... Natural !
The trees rose over my head
and Ego,
like giant Olmee heads of hard
brown
wearing sashes of Green,
Yellow
and colours Myriad!
Humbling my proud, vile
heart!
As I strode further,
slowly and stepwise,
trampling decadent wood,
leaves,
my Soul began to compre-
hend
a Truth - no deeper than Life!
Slowly and softly,
a warm mist set
Heavily into its Core.
A Core,
The Sun's all revealing
beams
penetrated no more !
My Heart was cleansed
and Essence pure,
I trudged deeper
Far from the "Sane" world

IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND

** Khirod Malik*

A hushed whisper
in the hospital room,
around bed number fifty-eight:
the sun setting
behind the closing eyes.
The morning wind mourns
the passing of the dear days.
I wonder what myths
surround our little lives:
the brittle eggshell,
the white and the yolk inside.
Shafts of sunlight
pierce the autumn clouds.
This tearful farewell at the
door
brings a taste of tomorrow.
A solitary pigeon wings its
way
towards the far horizon.
My mind wanders
to the edge of time:
I shudder to think
how hungry black holes lurk
at the centres of galaxies.

But does the heart
understand? □

FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR HANDS

** Nupur Saikia*

Even in sleep
We gaze and gaze
Standing at the other bank
of the ancient world
At your two still hands
That have been busy
In crafting the earthen pots.
A flight of sparrows
Is running after a fire
Which is blazing down
from a clear blue sky
Gradually it is entering
into the earthen pots
Like a grief stricken silent
river.

Quietly comes to an end
time's wonder
Quietly we move on through
gnarled sins and deep sor-
rows
To a state of oblivion
Leaving behind
our occasional flirtation.

But again and again
Your hands wake us up
That has been cold in crafting
Earthen pots
Ages since.

We wake up each morning
And look forward to
endless tomorrow. □

SOLACE

** Pramod Kumar Rath*

Flesh cannot resist
the temptations,
Mind desperately convinces
the impulses,
a bitch in sin's belly
hounds every now and then.
Terror reigns
in the boundless cosmos.
Chaos, chaos everywhere
Chaos prevails.
Leaders talk of peace,
Missiles carry the message.
Death showers
in Skylark's voice.
"Come, come",
says my grandpa
in my dream "I'll show you
where the Mahatma lies na-
ked.
His tears are not dried yet".
A leper may be cursed
a 'Sadbhavana Diwas'
may be observed
a 'Sankalpayatra' may be set out
but never, never a synthesis
is struck,
reality is always hoodwinked.
None raises the right ques-
tion in the right time in right
earnest.
All are only tight with goody-
goody
Superiority, an ego, a compla-
cency.

Pestilent vapours sink into the
abyss!

O' Nothingness! - shall I call
you the solace - the healing
balm to the wounds of this
warring

Perverse race? □

** heads the deptt. of English at Pola-
sara Science College, Dist: Ganjam,
Orissa.*

A GREAT ESCAPE

** Manoj Kumar Dash*

There was no such path
As we walked through the
jungle
Whichever way we set foot on
That became a path
We walked on dry leaves
And listened to their murmur
As we went further and fur-
ther
Deep into the unknown jungle
It unfolded before us
Like a mystery, like a secret
Wild flowers had opened pet-
als
And their fragrance was in
the air
We went deeper and deeper
Into the enchanting jungle
The trees became denser and
denser
And the shadows darker
The jungle echoed with the
notes

Under a nameless tree
 We heard the liquid noise
 Of a hilly stream
 Soon we moved towards it
 Feeling very thirsty
 There was a small fall
 Its water clear like glass
 We sat near it quenching thirst
 Listening to its music
 When we thought
 It was time to return
 The shadows had turned thicker
 We thought of staying back
 For sometime more to experience
 The peace and bliss
 But we returned with quick steps
 Lest we should get lost
 We had neither any compass
 Nor any map

Amidst the heavy shadows
 It was a great escape. □

* teaches English at Women's College,
 Bargarh, Orissa.

TEMPLE OF SIMPLE

** Er. N. Karthikeyan Osho*

The evening rays of light
 is mild and not wild;
 But the bud of rose
 is sweet and smelt the sun,
 Before it goes to deep sleep

The evening rays of light
 is mild and not wild;
 The life's limb and limbo is
 magic
 In little for title many in agony
 perish,
 But the silence bay of love ne'er
 tragic
 Keeps my heart healthy and
 relished. □

* Add: Krishna Raja Nagar, West Ve-
 lachery, Adambakkam, Chennai, T.N.

ON SALVATION

** Sapan Kumar Jena*

For this and that Dear God!
 Why thou doth blame me?
 Why thou doth make us eternally
 damn'd?
 Relish us from Elysian bliss?

If thou ever wisheth to cen-
 sure -
 Attribute it upon the First-Cou-
 ple;
 But open us the Gate to Para-
 dise-
 The abode of peace,
 Immortal Youth, and -
Salvation □

* Headmaster at Govt. Girls' High

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