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CRITICISM

Woman as Protagonist in Anita Desai's **Cry, the Peacock**

** Dr. N. Vijayasamundeeswari*

Anita Desai's (1937) perception of Indian life essentially centers on the glitter and squalor of the modern city. Her novels not only embody a realistic view of the city, with its sick hurry and divided aims but also encompass it as a metaphor of her fiction. The constant pressure of the urban milieu stifles the characters. A sense of vacuum and chaos is induced and a sense of despair and alienation in the individual is intensified.

Cry, the Peacock is an outstanding and compulsive novel written with vivid imagination and excellent powers of description. It relates the story of a young girl Maya, who is obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster which cannot be averted. It is also a story of marital discord imbued with a strong streak of neurotic fantasy on the part of women. The couple, their relatives and friends have been characterized with uncanny precision. Desai follows the triptych structure in this novel. Part I and Part III are very brief consisting of three and eleven pages respectively. Part I works like a prologue to the novel which describes the condition leading Maya to her neurosis. As s childless woman, she thinks that the death of her pet dog Toto is a sure prelude to another great and impending tragedy.

The story is about Maya and her married life with Gautama. Almost the entire story is'remembrance of things past' (stream of conscience) by Maya herself. The pages in the first part tell us about the scavenging truck carrying away Maya's dead dog Toto. The last few pages describing what happens after the death of Gautama are in the third person and the whole of part two which is the main central block of the novel is Maya's memory and sensibility trying to achieve recordation and definition. The action of the novel is located in Delhi, but the presence is neither obstructive nor obsessive.

Maya's husband Gautama is a busy, prosperous, middle-aged lawyer. Kindly cultured, rational, practical, he is too much engrossed in his own affairs

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to meet the demands, partly temperamental, partly spiritual, of his young wife. Maya is full of life and wants to enjoy life to the utmost. To her, sexual satisfaction is a must. Total denial of it makes her a victim of neurosis and schizophrenia.

She is interested in all the good things of life-in nature, in the life of birds and animals, poetry and dance. She loses herself in enjoyment, beautiful sights and sounds. The cries of the birds evoke a sympathetic chord in her. She is an epicurean to the core. Maya is an embodiment of emotion, whereas Gautama is of rationality.

Gautama, a friend of her father is very senior to her in age. He is a dry, matter of fact and prosaic personality. He looks upon her love for good things as nothing more than sentimentalism. He is awfully indifferent to and even oblivious of the delightful and the beautiful things around him. He preaches to her the ideal of disinterestedness. He looks down, upon her thoughts musings as insignificant and describes the cultural atmosphere of her father as decadent.

Though there are number of other differences between them, all these could have endured by her provided her sexual desires could be gratified. In spite of seductive postures, her initiative in love-making, Gautama remains rigid and cold. Maya describes her predicament in these words.

> *I turned upon my side closer to him; conscious of swell of my hip that rose under the white sheet which fell in him sculptured folds about my rounded form. His eyes remained blank of appraisal, of any response. It was as though he had seen only what he had expected to see nothing less and nothing more (41-42).*

Gautama makes a disparaging remark about Maya that she has a third rate poetess' mind. Maya is touched to the quick and answers him by confessing to him: "Because when you are away from me, I want you. Because I insist on being with you, being allowed to touch you and know you. You can't bear it, can you? No, you are afraid. You might perish"(113). Regarding the relationship between Maya and Gautama, Shanta Krishnaswamy observes: "Her needs for nurturance and for being nurtured are left unfulfilled by a husband who is incapable of husbanding her in his traditional masculine role." (Krishnaswamy, 250) In this connection the following remarks are also full of significance. She is not seeking a fulfillment of the mundane love but of archetypal love. She is longing for the companionship like that of Radha and Krishna. It is a communion that she seeks when it shrieks out its inside in its shrill, intense, mating calls.

Written in the stream of consciousness technique, the inner being of the

characters is explored and deep revelations are unearthed. The solitude and silence of the house prey upon Maya. The death of her pet dog starts reminiscence and reverie. Suddenly eerie bits of experience that has been long buried under the load of the years, is thrown up like lava and glares at her in all its alienness and fury. As a girl, she had gone with her *ayah* to an astrologer with albino eyes. He has prophesied unnatural death, four years after her marriage to either husband or wife. This long-forgotten but now newly remembered prophecy acts upon Maya with the same force of inevitability as the prophecy acts upon Maya with the same force of inevitability as the prophecy of the witches, acts upon Macbeth.

Deep in Maya's consciousness, the terror persists and paralyses more and more the normal motions of her mind and heart. Her mother is dead; her brother Arjuna disowned by their father is in New York. She herself has fled down by the corridors of years, from the embrace of protection in her dear father's house in Lucknow to embrace of Gautama's love. But her fate has been pursuing her all the time and the final, the decisive year has her in its grin. Her fear of insecurity and dependence remind the words of Nara, in Henrik Ibsen's **A Doll's House**. When Nora leaves her husband Helmer and her three children once for all, in the end of the play, she tells him,

> *When I was at home with father, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you – I mean that I was simply transferred from father's hands into yours. (Kushwaha, 75)*

But Nora has saved her husband's life whereas Maya has killed her husband due to the obsession of prophecy.

Neither Gautama's nor her own family can help her now. Perhaps Gautama can help her but he is too much of a prisoner in his own attitude and behavior to be anxious or able to locate her trouble and rescue her from it in time. In her own eyes, she is as one doomed already. Over the whole narrative there hovers an uncanny oppressive sense of fatality. Maya and Gautama, of course, make several attempts of serious conversation. But a nameless barrier prevents effective communication. What real to her is shadowy to him. Facts and hard realities interest him but they have no interest for her. Three years they have lived together. The crucial fourth year is upon them. There is no power to still the storm within or exercise the creeping terror, the ravenous jaw of the scepter, Death. Gautama is full of affection and tenderness. But it is the inner spiritual contact that fails to click. The increasing celebration only accentuates the inner

disintegration.

One of the determining causes of Maya's tragedy is the albino astrologer's prophecy. Another cause is the myth surrounding the peacock's cry. When she is aware of death, she feels, "The years had caught up, and now the final, the decisive one held me in its perspiring clasp from which release seemed impossible." (95) These words prove that she cannot escape from her fatal death. The peacocks are said to flight before they mate: "Living, they are aware of death. Dying, they are in love with life". (95-96) Maya's heated imagination jumbles prophecy and myth into a nightmarish certainty.

Maya's loneliness in the house is paradoxically due to her too much of attachment. It is not for the lack of love for her husband that she suffers, but for too much of love for him. Her feeling of alienation emerges basically from her total disillusionment with the life of the metropolis that has little regard for abiding emotional relationships. She is stifled by the constant pressure of the urban milieu which induces a sense of vacuum and chaos and intensifies the sense of despair and alienation in her. Her inner suffering becomes more acute due to the lack of communication between her and her husband. Since she is deeply in love with life, she turns hysteric over the creeping fear of death. While brooding over her miserable conditions, she thus says:

> *God, now I was caught in the net of the inescapable, and where lay the possibility of mercy, of release? This net was no hallucination, no. in the day-time amidst companions ; I could force myself into believing that it was only a nightmare, no more. But, in the night, under the star-gaze of the moon, in that waiting silence, my memories came to life, were so vivid, so detailed, I knew them to be real. Or is it madness? Am I gone insane? Father! Brother ! Husband! Who is my savior? I am in need of one, I am dying, and I am in love with living. I am in love, and I am dying. God, let me sleep, forget, rest. But no, I'll never sleep again. There is no rest any more- only death and waiting (97-98)*

The titles of all the novels of Anita Desai are significant and expressive. But perhaps it is the title of this novel **Cry, the Peacock** which suggests the theme of the novel more poignantly than that of any other novel. There is an identification of Maya with the peacocks. They represent for her cries of love which simultaneously invite their death. Like Maya, peacocks are the creature of exotic wild, and will not rest till they have danced the dance of death. For her they represent the revolutionary instinct of struggle for survival. She describes how they dance and the remarkable impact produced on her mind:

In the shadows I saw peacocks dancing, the thousand eyes upon their shimmering feathers gazing steadfastly, unwinkingly upon the final truth-Death. I heard their cry and echoed it. I felt their thirst as they gazed at the rain clouds their passion as they hunted for their mates. With them, I trembled and panted and paced the burning rocks. Agony, agony, the mortal agony of their cry for lover and for death. (96)

In her mother-in-law's company, Maya has a fleeting savior glimpse. But the in-laws leave for Calcutta. Maya is left alone to wrestle with her ghosts. Deep in the hinterland of her consciousness, she decides that even for the fulfillment of the astrologer's prophecy, her own death is not necessary: it might be Gautama's for that matter – "Suddenly, I came upon that panicky after-thought for the first time" (164). There is really no escape for her now.

Gautama remains so much lost in his work that he is oblivious of the dust-storm that has happened earlier in the afternoon. However, he accompanies Maya on the roof of the house at her request. While walking on the terrace, she is attracted by the pale hushed glow of the rising moon. As Gautama moves in front of her, the moon is hidden from her view. In a frenzy mood, she pushes him over the parapet to "pass through an immensity of air down to the very bottom." (205). Thus Gautama's life comes to a sudden and tragic end. Maya is sent to her father's house.

Three days later, Gautama's mother and sister take Maya to her father's house at Lucknow. It is tacitly understood that she will have to be put into an asylum. But in the course of the night, the sane women hear a cry of horror, and they rushed upstairs; the heavy white figure of the elder woman goes towards "the bright frantic one on the balcony, screaming. They met for an instance, there was a silence and then both disappeared into the dark white." (218) Nora leaves her husband and her three children, for seeking her self-identity. She wants to live alone for herself, without any family and social bindings. But in the case of Maya, her obsession and neurosis drag her to commit suicide. The fear of death may get aggravated more in her and drive her to kill herself.

K.R. Srinivas Iyengar observes: "Although it is the first novel, it scores because Maya is at once the centre and circumference of this world. Her intensity-whether she is sane, hysterical or insane-fills the whole book and gives it forms as well as life." (Iyengar, 468) **Cry, the peacock** is the product of the general crafts woman. It is an outstanding and compulsive novel written by sensitive writer with a wonderful imagination and remarkable powers of description. By exploring Maya's

mind through subtitle images-conscious and unconscious- Anita Desai has firmly established herself as a psychological novelist in the annals of Indian English Fiction.

In the words of B. Ramachandra Rao, **Cry, the Peacock** is something of a technical triumph:

> *Desai's ability to use the language English in a uniquely individual fashion is amply shown in this novel. Her careful artistry is illustrated by her intelligent mixing of the first person narrative with the third person rendering the study for the purpose of contrast. And although Desai's sympathies as a writer are with Maya, she maintains a distance from her character so that the reader is able to see that character in all its complexity and richness. (85)*

Her pre- occupation with death had been actually planted long ago in her childhood by the albino astrologer prophecy foretelling the death of either of the couple after the marriage. The other causes of her suffering are her marriage to Gautama, a man of her father's age who is detached and reserved even to the extent of non-fulfilling of her physical and emotional needs. The indifferent behaviour of her husband's family members increases her sense of loneliness which gradually develops in to an actual sense of alienation. In Part III Maya regresses back to an infantile state and finally leaps to death. In the final section the writer turns omniscient with a final authorial comment at the end of this novel.

Maya's loneliness in the house is paradoxically given to her too much of attachment. Her feeling of alienation emerges basically from her total disillusionment with the life of metropolis that has little regard for abiding emotional relationships. The party at the house of Mrs. Lal and the prim lady are the symbolic representatives of sham of the metropolis. The members of Gautama's family, his mother and his sister Nila, like the city itself are indifferent to human relationships. Nila, who is not happy with her husband, tries to divorce her husband. On the other hand Maya feels imprisoned in her in-law's house. In spite of his aversion to city life, Arjuna, Maya's only brother hopelessly clings to it. He becomes a victim of the oppressive currents of the city. Sometimes he finds it very hard to make both ends meet. But he does not bother as life itself to him is a devoid of meaning. □

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Nissim Ezekiel's Fascination for India

* Dr. Ram Bahadur Yadav

"I am not a Hindu and my background makes me a natural outsider, circumstances and decisions relate me to India. In another country I am a foreigner. In India, I am an Indian".

These words of Nissim Ezekiel speak volumes about his feelings for India. Actually he was very much conscious about his Bene-Israeli origin and his Indian context. At a time when Nissim Ezekiel was trying to achieve his poetic distinction and cultural identity, the scenario of India was passing through a very critical situation. The Britishers had already faced the idea of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural status of India. On the other hand, an awareness of Hinduism was trying to seek the image of India within it. At the time of independence of India, there was division of India on the basis of religious considerations and ethnic violence.

At the time there was growing consciousness of Indianism and the Hindu community was trying to hold the real image of India within itself. Other communities could hardly become the shares of that great pride of Indianism that was being kept at the time of Independence. The horrible wind of violence had already blown up the sober colours of cultural distinction of the synthesis of multi-ethnic character of India.

During his nonage, Nissim Ezekiel had to face the problem of seeking his cultural identity. His Hindu friends extended their favour to him as if it was a

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part of sympathy to him. They behaved as if India was their nation and he was a foreigner among them. But Nissim Ezekiel always had a strong urge to feel himself an Indian with a strong sense of belonging. His definition of India and Indianness was beyond all narrow considerations. The multifarious character of the people living in Indian sub-continent included the Indianness of a person like him also. From his own point of view, the cultural heritage of India includes a number of phenomena. The following words are significant in this regard.

"There is not a set formula (to relate to contemporary India and also to the whole Indian heritage) not set pattern but an unending series of adjustments and perceptions. In living out those I have experienced tensions, frustrations, disappointments and failures because there is also the need to be true in oneself. The form that self takes is unique, non-conformist, isolated from the traditional as well as the non-traditional selves his Indian context….. but no label fits the self I recognize as mine, no single unified identity which would make life for me. It is not easy because there is too much to unify, too much that resist integration, conflicts and contradictions for example, between my Jewish racial soul and my Indian choices. I cannot ignore the first nor deny the power of the second. A compromise is not good enough but there is some refuse in being creative, using both as raw material for direct as well as oblique expression."

The discussion of Indianness always reminds an important consideration with Nissim Ezekiel. In 1983, he wrote an article What is Indian in Indo-English Poetry. He questioned the exactness of what Indianness demands. He was not interested in those poets of Indo-English character, who lost the concept of their of being native and drifted apart from their mother's milk and went to swim across the English channels. He favoured the scene of Indo-English poetry if the echoes of native land were contently audible. Let us mark his own words on this point:

"And I realize now that there is no single Indian flavour which alone can claim the designation, and that its value, too depends on a host of generative factors which should never be simplified for purpose of praise or blame. It should, in any case, not be considered the decisive factor in assessing the worth of anything of Indian origin, including Indo-English Poetry."

Really, our real interest in his poetry is also due to the fact that his poetic product has in it patriotic shadows and yearning for real cultural image of India. He makes recurrent use of Indian situations and beliefs in his poetry and deserves the compliment from C.D.Narasimhaiah in the following words:

"But to the extent he has availed himself of the composite culture of

India to which he belongs he must be said to be an important part not merely in the Indian context, but in a consideration of those that are writing poetry anywhere in English"

Nissim Ezekiel was proud of finding himself an Indian in Indian background. He was also highly interested in the glory of the cultural past of India. He read the **Geeta** and the **Upanishads** with more than ordinary attention because he had a few derogatory remarks from the fathers of the Christian School in which he took his early education. By his own statement, we learn that the adverse comments of the Christian father about Hinduism brought him nearer to the ancient Hindu texts to confirm whether his teachers were right in any manner ? But he found it otherwise and understood the greatest meaning of life hidden in the ancient texts like **The Gita**, **The Upanishads** and **The Vedas**. Let us mark the following words of Ezekiel:

*"Once I had arrived at the general position, I developed a more positive attitude towards the Indian heritage. **The Vedas** and **Upanishads** to my eyes, moved closer to the ultimate truth, and the spiritual paradoxes of the **Bhagwat Gita** acquired a profound meaning …. It would be enough from view point, if we could assimilate what we can form India's spiritual achievement without swallowing the whole complex of doctrines, associated with them".*

So Nissim Ezekiel found greatness in the glorious past of India and developed a strong sense of belonging to India with its multi-ethnic face. The following remarks of Ezekiel during his first major interview with Dr. John B. Beston, University of Hawai in December 1975 holds much significance:

"I read myself essentially as an Indian poet writing in English. I have a strong sense of belonging, not only to India, but to this city. I would never leave Bombay. It's a series of commitments-at the notion of being a world poet, I feel a little empty, rootless. One needs some sense of belonging, but there is a trap in stultifying one's evidence in terms of specific geographical location."

The same feeling of Ezekiel is further intensified in the following extract from his selected prose:

"India is simply my environment. A man can do something for and in his environment by being fully what he is, by not withdrawing from it. I have not withdrawn from India. I am incurably critical and skeptical. That is what I am in relation to India also. And to myself, I find it does not prevent the growth of love. In this sense only, I love India. I expect nothing, nothing in return because critical sceptical love does not beget love."

Nissim Ezekiel's thoughtfulness and mystic visions were strengthened by his close study of the Indian classical texts of the **Upanishads** and The **Gita**. As far as the religion is concerned, he was not fanatic about it. He knew that he had a different religion by his birth. But he developed distaste for all those things which were being performed and practiced in the name of religion. The orthodox rituals of any religion as either decided by his birth or its practice around him in the name of Christianity, Hinduism or Muslim did not impress him anymore. But he was very much impressed by the native mystical traditions of India where he could achieve direction in the knowledge of human life. He always felt the substantial truths about life which were present in the glorious texts of India. Let us mark his own words as he wrote in **The Heritage of India**:

"Judaism was my religion but I not only rejected in early youth but all religions with it. That I am today back into Judaism in a small way and accepted the core of all historical religion is a different story… Even when I was an atheist, therefore, against all religions, I had no problems in the appreciation of their mystical tradition."

Nissim Ezekiel's fascination for India has psychological basis also. It is the hunger of every human heart to belong somewhere. Sense of belonging is the basic need of any human living in any part of the world. Even those communities who migrated from one land to another tried to seek their identities in a different fashion under the changing circumstances. The settlements of the European communities in the far and wide regions of the world are the living examples in this regard.

The story of Nissim Ezekiel's belongingness is, therefore, reminiscent of a big psychological question of human living. By his racial origin, he belonged to Judaism, Israel being the native country of his race. But during the last hundreds of years the migration of his community to the Indian sub-continent created a different story of belongingness. Whatever hardships his community suffered due to their alien character, the succeeding races found their principal character of belongingness in the Indian soil. Nissim Ezekiel was thoughtful about all such questions and psychological adjustments. That is why he makes the following comments:

"What happens if your house is not really a house in full sense of the word, intellectually and culturally, but only a stage for rehearsing a play that is never completed and may never be performed? I admit that I am describing metaphorically the way I feel about it now, looking back on it after that phase of my life is over.

Certain people try to associate Indianness with the strong religious and

philosophical character. According to this consideration a man with no religious or philosophical background as such will not be able to attain the strong Indian character. But this is only a defective understanding of what an ordinary Indian feels in Indian soil. Nissim Ezekiel himself was clear on this point. He wanted to enforce, and has succeeded into doing so, the secular outlook of Indianness.

Actually, Nissim Ezekiel suffered from a particular problem of belongingness and yet not belonging to what he felt belongingness. It was a kind of rootlessness amidst his own roots of Indianness. He felt he belonged and yet perhaps did not belong. Other around him, particularly those of the large Hindu Community, made him feel that he was not of the land. Even after this, he continued to repose his confidence in what he felt about his Indian roots in his innerself.

Thus, we do not need any more explanation to accept the reality of Nissim Ezekiel as a poet of Indian background. His fascination for India and his pride in his Indian roots are visible almost everywhere in his writings. His discussion and his interviews confirm that he has a strong Indian sensibility. By his parentage and religion, he appeared to be a foreigner, whose ancestors had migrated to India long back and settled down in the metropolitan city of Bombay. He was every inch an Indian as he was born in Bombay, brought up in Bombay, educated in Bombay and after his occasional trips to different countries finally came to Bombay to earn his livelihood and to settle down permanentally. Thus, he is steeped and soaked in Indian life and his poetic imagination gets its real function when he has for its food the real Indian things from the native land. Although he suffered at the hands of the Indian boys due to the difference of his religion, yet he never felt to leave of his native pride. □

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THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DORIS LESSING's **THE GRASS IS SINGING**

* Dr. Ibrahim Khalilulla, M.

Anglo-American women writers have created a unique literature of their own for more than two centuries now. Like many literary subcultures women's literature too has passed through three distinct phases (Showalter 13). At the initial stage they attempted to "imitate" the prevailing modes of dominant tradition and tried to "internalize" its norms of art and its views on social roles. From here it moved on to "protest" against these standards and values and "advocate" its own rights and values and even demand autonomy. Finally with maturity it began its search of creating its own identity by looking inwards. Showalter, however, admits that these phases are not watertight compartments. In fact they often overlap and quite often in the works of a single individual all three phases can be seen. Moreover with the end of two major World Wars, changes in women's position in the society, their literature too has entered a new phase. To quote Showalter:

> *"In the 1960s the female novel entered a new and dynamic phase, Which has been strongly influenced…… by the energy of inter-national women's movement. The Contemporary women's novelobserves the traditional forms of nineteenth century realism, but it also operates in the contexts of twentieth century Freudian and Marxist analysis. In the fiction of Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, and the young writers Margaret Drabble, A.S. Byatt and Beryl Bainbridge, we are beginning to see a renaissance In women's writing that responds to the demands of Lewes and Mill for an Authentically female literature providing "women's view of life, women's experience"(35).*

Of all writers mentioned above Doris Lessing has often been given the epithet of being a "sage, seer, prophetess", "a visionary teacher and guide". Among contemporary novelists there is no one who has accepted this ethical role more conscientiously or over a longer period of time than Lessing. For close to four decades her work has served as a fictional listening post for the most pressing moral issues in the late twentieth century society. Her novels

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have dealt with racism and expatriation. She has examined various socialist and political organizations, gender related issues and threat of nuclear destruction. She has also probed into both the human and inhuman faces of seen the importance of inner space, the relationship between individual and collectivity, has delved into Sufism and has tried to look beyond self. But of all works it is in **The Grass is Singing** that we find Lessing taking up many of these issues.

Lessing's first novel, **The Grass is Singing**, was published in 1950 in Britian, America and Continental Europe. The Grass is Singing is a bleak and terrifying analysis of a failed marriage, the febrile neurosis of white sexuality, and the fear of black power and energy that Lessing saw as underlying the white colonial experience of Africa. She joined the Communist Party for a short period, but left it in 1956. In the same year, the Rhodesian government declared that they would not allow her to return there. Since 1950, Lessing has lived in England. Doris Lessing is best known as a novelist and short-story writer, but she has written plays, poems, essays and non-fiction. Her work explore psychological, political and moral attitudes, and the role of women in modern society.

The Grass is Singing, published in 1950, is Doris Lessing's first novel. The story takes place in Rhodesia(now Zimbabwe), in southern Africa, in the late 1940s. From 1923-1980 Rhodesia was a British colony, with its own white government. **The Grass is Singing** tells the story of a white woman and her unhappy marriage to Dick, a poor white farmer. The heroine, Mary, falls obsessively in love with her black houseboy. She treats him cruelly, as she treats all black Africans. The story ends with Mary's madness and murder. In the novel we find full exploration of issues, which have preoccupied modern women. It is fundamentally feminist in its attitude to truth, its emphasis on multiplicity and fragmentation, and its ethical and nurturing stance. This multi-layered book explores the female psyche at length baring woman's innermost feelings, her fears, anxieties, joys and strengths. It also looks at the very basic question, which has bothered most creative writers- can art express truth? Truth here, of course refers to authenticity of reality as expressed in a work of art. In trying to understand the nature of true experience it also examines various ideologies especially Marxist Philosophy, which has had a deep influence on the modern person. It also explores the post-War World, which has been full of chaos and disillusionment and seeks to understand whether some kind of order can be formed out of it.

As the first novel **The Grass is Singing** introduces many of the areas like racism and the colour question, politics and gender ideology, disintegrations

and mental collapse, repression and construction of individual identity. Issues concerned with colonizing, both white versus black and man vs. woman and the implications thereof, are meaningfully addressed through the novel. A look at Mary Turner reveals her head held high, mouth set tight, rigid with pride and determination not to show weakness. Forever stiff with resentment, her voice is that of the suffering female, an inheritance from her mother. Keen to perform the coloniser's role to perfection she is obsessed with natives. Keeping vigil with a vengeance, flying at them at the slightest pretext she treats them worse than animals. While on the farm with Dick, her thoughts are always with the native back home, alone with 'her' things, 'handling' them. Her early life is seen as having been a major formative influence on her psyche, her self-conscious behaviour and repressed sexual attitudes a result of the subduing of her personality in an attempt to consciously remodel it in order to fit into an acceptable social stereotype. These repressions surface in the form of her desire for Moses, the native who works for the Turners and her killer too. It may be suggested that her private self was largely a result of the traumatic relationship between her parents and her public persona shaped under the impact of experiences of living in racist Africa. Is it possible though to effect such a division without risking an inner divisiveness, one wonders. Mary certainly manifests schizophrenia of a kind. There is a split between her two selves, the conforming and the rebellious, both of which are social constructs. The repressive patriarchal society has pushed all the repressions into the unconscious and these surface when she breaks down. Breakdown and fragmentation are important themes in Lessing's work.

Mary is made off-balance by heat, loneliness and povery. The dissataisfaction and lack of joy in her essential temperament is highlighted due to these factors. Her inherent qualities, for instance, an impersonal, shy and stiff manner, repelled by intimacies, take on further intensity. Having taken the voice of the suffering female, her relationship with Dick is paradoxical. She had agreed to be his wife, even like him, if he put himself in a subordinate position. The sexual act too is satisfactory in a perverse sort of way in that it doesn't touch her anywhere. Theirs is a complex relationship as it addresses questions like "what kind of a man does a woman need", "when she saw him weak and goal-less she hated him and the hatred turned upon herself"(GS 168). Patriarchal standards are internalized to such an extent that in order to respect herself Mary needs to find worthiness in her man. She wonders how people can be born without that "streak of determination, that bit of iron that clamped the personality together. Hopeless, decent, nice, doomed" is how she describes Dick(168).

When all hopes that she had pinned on the tobacco crop are shattered ~~as a result of drought she suffers from irrevocable loss of hope and emptiness~~

as she realizes that it would be years before they could get off the farm. It is for her a time of "dull misery: not the sharp bouts of unhappiness that had attacked her earlier (that was at least an ability to feel). Now she felt as if she were going soft inside at the core, as if a soft rottenness was attacking her bones…..numbed, tired, without interest"(162). She makes an effort to hold on to something that might save her when she asks Dick if they can have a child and when he refuses she sinks further into the darkness of herself. By now she has developed all signs of a nervous breakdown, listlessness and lack of interest, irritation and stupor, tiredness and numbness. She makes a last desperate attempt to spend time with Dick on the farm but here too meets no success: "and now she gave way….she felt as if a touch would send her off-balance into nothingness; she thought of a full complete darkness with longing"(173).

Complete inner disintegration sets in for Mary when she is brought back by Dick after she runs away to town to get back to her job. Her experience with the boss and others at the office makes her realize that she is a misfit. She seems to have come from another world with her chipped nails, coarse hands, streaky scrawny hair, muddy shoes. There seems to be something more serious wrong too as she is unable to 'connect'. Her isolation on the farm and the degradation she had sunk to due to poverty and the inhospitable African climate makes her unsuitable for company. The channels of spontaneity and real emotion seem to have been permanently blocked, both due to childhood experiences of living with parents who shared a loveless marriage as well as coping with pressures of living in a racist society. She lives then on a different plane of reality, turning within all the time so that slow disintegration matures into complete neuroses. External factors interrupt and thus delay her downward slide as she is forced to relate to the world without, at least superficially and for sometime, and thus cannot afford to really slip into the abyss. Most breakdowns in women are known to take place when extraneous factors like familial responsibilities do not make the kind of demands they once did with children having grown independent, leading a feeling of superfluity and unwantedness in the female psyche.

Mary's relationship with Moses is crucial to an understanding of the text. It is significant that her repressions surface through interaction with an individual who is a victim of colonialism. The darkness within her responds to the dark reality of the bush symbolized by him. She feels for him repulsion as well as a strange attraction that her conscious mind cannot comprehend. Having been schooled to hate the natives and treat them like the scum of the earth she is obsessed with ideas of keeping them "under strict vigil, fly at them under the

slightest pretext"(GS 80). The atmosphere of the novel is characterized by an attitude to the blacks that is wholly negative and discriminatory. Significantly, the experience of seeing him bathing and an acknowledgement of it by both "jerked her clean out of her apathy for the first time in months, seeing the ground she walked on, feeling the hot sun on her neck(177).

The Mary-Moses relationship undergoes a change as her condition deteriorates. Her mind allows her to let everything slide and she is unable to cope with external reality. When he announces that he wants to leave she breaks down. A new relationship develops between them as she feels herself to be helplessly in his power. She suffers from a strange and irrational fear, the colonizer expecting the colonized to strike back perhaps. When nursing Dick back to health, she is extremely conscious of his footsteps in the next room. Dreams of Moses mingle incoherently with those of her father as she sinks into a different order of reality, unwashed smells of her father from her childhood resurfacing in the form of Moses advancing towards her.

Interestingly, Lessing comments on the deceiving quality of memory when she questions the authenticity and validity of remembered experience in her autobiography. In **African Laughter** she writes: "… I hold a series of sharp little scenes, like photographs, or eidetic memory, which I refer to". Time, for her, has "slippery qualities", chipping, eroding blurring… "if you labour enough over an event, a moment, you make a solid thing of it, may revisit it… is it still there? Is it still the same?", she asks(Al 40). Moses, however, belongs to the repressed facet of her personality too as the colonized is in a sense part of the coloniser's psyche. For Mary then the one reality she is forced to confront is that of Moses. In her mind a confusion has been effected, making her both the powerful and the powerless. As the former she holds the reins while as the latter she is the colonized 'other'. He is physically strong and takes initiative, both of which are qualities she is unable to find in her husband. Her search for a man who will assume power is what invests Moses with it while the dialectics make the relationship for Mary both threatening and terrifying. The mere acknowledgement of a personal connection between them leads to a confusion of the norm that is so unsettling that it pushes her further down the abyss. Dream and reality come together as she wakes up from her menacing dream to find him standing there, a cup of tea in his hand. The voice of the dream asks her, "Madame, afraid of me, yes?" and later, as she replies in a high-pitched voice "(laughing nervously sort of voice, flirtatious) Don't be ridiculous" the barriers that separate black from white are eliminated too, thereby admitting a possibility that it is sacrilege to admit (GS 204). All horrors break loose as a chink in the white armour is exposed, danger so far lurking in the shadows coming

dangerously close. Mary's unconscious, hitherto repressed, and this is the 'shadow' aspect that Jung writes of too, begins to surface and her conscious self begins to avoid contact with him. "When he had left after lunch for his time off, she went hastily into the kitchen, almost furtively, made cold drinks for Dick, and returned looking behind her as if pursued"(206). For the first time in her life she willfully seeks refuge in the marital bed, thankful to be close to Dick. The unconscious has gained so much primacy that the pattern of the conscious has to be changed in order to keep its threatening influences at bay. "Dick became to her, as time went by, more and more unreal; while the thought of the African grew obsessive"(206). The conscious and the unconscious have gradually and imperceptibly changed places. The only time Mary suddenly became alert was when Moses was in the room. She remains in a dream of her own and he is part of her dream. Besides, for her the dreams is an alternative order of reality. Tony notices that her manner had no relation to what she was saying and he gets the impression that "she wasn't quite all there". He adds, "she behaves simply as if she lives in a world of her own, where other people's standards don't count. She has forgotten what her own people are like. But then what is madness but a refuge, a retreating from the world?"(222). The call to solidarity that holds most whites together in an alien land sets the code of behavior-that then is the norm. For many in her isolation and a deliberate inwardness due to pride, unadaptability, a twisted personality, that call was never a valid one and thus she could set her own standards, make her own code. Now more than ever, and Charlie Slatter too notice that things are not as they should be when he sees that Mary speaks to Moses with a coy flirtatiousness and he in turn uses an offensive tone of authority. Mary's life has been a persistent endeavour to get away from a statement about herself that she had overheard long ago, her rushing into marriage contrary to her own spontaneous desires and rigidly held beliefs symptomatic of this. "They said I was not like that" was a point of view she sets out to disprove, Moses attitude of "indulgent uxoriousness" as he dresses her, also an attempt to contradict the self-image that she confronts in the mirror(227). Moses look of admiration restores to some extent her self-confidence, awarding a kind of meaning to her existence. Deeply embedded in her subconscious is the feminine desire to please, attract and seduce the male. It is only when her 'other' self becomes predominant that she can behave in this manner because it is only in this state that she is unaware of the manner in which she is behaving. Whatever kind of person Mary inherently is she always feels the societal pressure to conform, to be someone else.

Now that the silent acceptance of white superiority has been shattered by an acknowledgement of fear in Mary's eyes and her subsequent appease-

ment of the native by her manner towards him there is a change in their relationship. He acquires a new tone, “familiar, half-insolent, domineering”. There is a split between Mary’s two selves, the self that conforms and the self that rebels. This is the complex work as explorations of psychological issues are mingled with the colour question, a personal human relationship examined against the impossibility of it. Dream then and forces of the unconscious that surface through them are doubly important here. An exploration of the unconscious through dreams, says Lessing, need not be seen as a threat but as a liberation from oppressive conditions which perpetuate feelings of worthlessness and despair.

The Grass is Singing is a powerful psychological study of an unhappy woman and her marriage. But at the same time, Lessing draws a picture of Rhodesian, society; she shows us how badly many white people treated black people during that period. When **The Grass is Singing** was first published, it was an immediate success, both in America and in Europe. □

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Attention Please

The January - June 2013 issue will be a special issue on Mulk Raj Anand, the famous Indo-English story-teller. Persons interested to submit papers (hard and soft copy) specially on Mulk Raj Anand may send to the editor by the end of December 2012.

Sd/- U.N. Majhi
Editor

OVERLEXICALIZATION IN GOLDING's **LORD OF THE FLIES**

* Dr. Ranjit Kumar Pati

In the opinion of Bloomfield, a word is 'a minimum free form'. It is the smallest linguistic form which occurs in isolation. In other words, it is a single unit of language that can be represented in writing or speech. Words refer to objects, actions, events, ideas, qualities in the world of experience outside of language. Words might be studied as normal words, neologisms, relexicalizations, overlexicalizations and dated words.

Fowler explains 'overlexicalization' that involves the presence of : "a large number of synonymous or nearsynonymous terms for communication of some specialized area of experience". William Golding's **Lord of the files** contains a few patterns of synonymous and near synonymous words which can be termed as overlexicalization.

The island gradually loses its colour with the progress of the plot and ugliness settles in its place. The words of Ralph are no more effective and Jack ultimately reigns over the island. Thus it is like evil winning over truth, of course for a temporary period till the rescue. The theme of disappointment and grief found in the children can be known from the following pattern of words:

Pale, apprehension, frustrated, mortification, pallor, humiliation, hurt, restlessness, discomfort, mad, shaky, hopeless, uneasy, lamentation, shrilly, sad, exasperate, rue, whine, scream, pain, oh! God! etc.

Similarly a number of words also form a pattern which expresses the atmosphere of fear and torture. The young children are suffering from homesickness. But as they have no way of escape, they have to make up their mind to adjust themselves to the new condition provided to them. They are afraid of the atmosphere prevailing in the island. In the process Percival, the little one, loses his identity and forgets his address at the end. The words of the following category present the atmosphere:

Skull, monster, phantom, grating, giant, awful, howling, screaming, growl, agonised, frightened, fierce, terrors, shudder, vicious, malevolently, moan,

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nightmares, pericus, intimidation, ghots, appal, menace, Leviathan, tremors, catasrophe, demented, squeal, trembling, gasping, sweating, shiver, torment, demonic, dreadful, monstrous, fatal, hangman, ululation, excruciatingly etc.

The treatment of decay and ugliness is equally prominent in the following pattern of words:

Pallidly, dreary, dark damp, decay, wild, bleaky, hell, pall, chill, smother, dread, foully, stinking, abominable, scab, dead, fllthy, charred, lifeless, befouled bodies ect.

The atmosphere of suspicion and unfriendly attitude is lightly touched. The pattern is as follows:

Blurt, unfriendly, furtive, dubious, inscrutable, snivel, resentful, derisive, mysteriously, inimical, incomprehensible etc.

The rivalry leads to the end of innocence in the island, with the murder of Simon, the Christ figure and Piggy, the good soul. The following pattern of words exhibits the theme of rivalry and end of natural innocence:

Grudgingly, squint, indignation, recrimination, antagonism, embroil, grimace, contemptuously ect.

Words like war paint, hunters, hunting, sheathknife, wooden spears, circling, signalled, clouted, stroke, stabbing, prodding, scream, shriek, squealling, lugging, prowling ect. associated with hunting in the island project the terrible brutality in the novel.

Hunter's enjoyment of the chanting"Kill the Pig! Cut her throat! Spill her blood!" epitomizes the terrible rivalry and brutality in the adult world.

The atmosphere of cruelty, intolerance and brutality is further evident from the following pattern of words:

Attack, shattered, assault, smashed, destruction, shudder, paralyse, pig-dying noise, hack ect.

Words associated with weapons and modern warfare run parallel in the novel. Most of them are referential words and are related to the theme of the novel. The pattern is as follows:

Army, pilot, cabin, fighter plane with wings, machine-gun, Commander in Navy, airport, atom bomb, cannon, boomed, short blast, plane, bomb, tank, jet, submarine, ship, battle, explosion, parachute, bang, helmeted-hed, white drill epaulettes, revolver, whistle, sub-machine gun, naval officer, cutter etc.

As a contrast to the natural setting of the island, the following pattern of words expresses the urban life as recollected by the children:

Black shoes, elastic garter, shirt, jacket, jersey, badges, stockings, clothing, square, black cap, silver badge, black cloaks, megaphone, trumpet-thing, railway line, Rugby ball, school, clock, policeman, law, houses, streets, T.V. set, steam engine, stone wall, garden, glasses, copper kettle, plate, bowl of cornflakes, sugar, cream, book-shelf, chess-player, radio, boat, air-field, bus-centre, car, trains, lamps, wheels, pillar-box, postman, uniform, sheets of cellophane, Wilshire, Catham, Devon, Dartmoor etc.

The life in the island is quite peaceful, happy and normal at the outset till the Devil in Jack overpowers. Of course, as per the Law of Nature, greater force is applied to counteract lesser force. The Naval Officer,a representative of military power arrives at last to restore normalcy in the island. The following pattern pf words expresses the atmosphere of peace, happieness and way of life in the island:

Fair, delight, ambition, giggle, good, reason, intelligence, attractive appearance, applause, triumph, rational assurance, amusement, cheerfulness, admiration, generosity, gay, rosily, good humoured, friendly, dancing, exult, silvery, pax etc.

It is interesting to mark an exciting pattern of words used in the novel. It affirms that Golding is not a pessimist. The pattern shows the varieties of colour as selected by Golding to paint nature in **Lord of the Flies**. They are the following:

Violet, brown, red, yellow, dark blue, shadowy green, purple, green, dark green, grey, deep cream, fading pink, grey blue-black, bulberry-coloured, mousecoloured, silver, golden, light blue, waxen green, olive green, china-blue, rose, crimson, white, cream, copper-coloured, iridescent green, black, blue, near white, blue-white, chocolate-coloured, chestnut, sandy, honey-coloured.

Lord of the Flies is remarkable for the varieties of overlexicalizations. The meaningful patterns reveal and present the theme and atmosphere of the novel more or less in an explicit manner. □

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BLAKE AND ECOLOGY

* Joseph Cherian

True art never dies; and a true artist never ceases to inspire. In an era of burning debates on environment and ecological concerns, it is heartening to note that William Blake(1757-1827) has inspiringly made his way into this foreboding terrain of global concern. He catches by a great variety of verbal and pictorial means the same concerns and feelings of today's world regarding the environmental and ecological issues. Because Blake's works are sufficiently metaphorical and conceptual, they can be brought into "fruitful dialogue with the modern socio-ecological theories that are mindful of the limits to economic growth, the revenge of exploited nature, and the lessons to be learned from stable primitive and archaic societies" (Ferber 113). One significant and remarkable aspect of Blake's work in this regard is that everywhere in his work we find barren wilderness transformed into gardens when man creatively asserts himself, and gardens transformed into wilderness when he falls or weakens spiritually and imaginatively.

At a time when our most urgent need is to address and redress the consequences of human civilization's insatiable desire to consume the products of the earth, Romantic ecocentrism or what is called 'green Romanticism' acquires immense significance (Hutchings 9). An important aspect of the science of ecology is the notion that all things are complexly interrelated. Human survival, and the survival of nature are co-ordinate with one another and they are mutually and innately interdependent. Blake was certainly aware of the unbridled exploitation of nature by a greedy society. In this epic poem ***Jerusaleam***, for instance, he enquires about the "Oak Groves of Albion that covered the whole Earth" and "the Kingdoms of the World & all their glory that grew on Desolation"(98:51; Bentley 1, 638) which are seen no more. Such oxymoronic, life-negating growth partakes of the approach to life that French ecological philosopher Michel Serres attributes to the human "parasite" - an approach wherein, by single-mindedly consolidating our own self-interest, we condemn to death the biospheric host that supports us (Hutchings 13).

Donald Worster argues that the "Romantic approach to nature was

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fundamentally ecological," because "it was concerned with relation, interdependence. and holism" (26). Since the concept of 'ecology' was not introduced until 1869 (when the term was coined by Charles Drawin's most prominent German disciple, Ernst Haeckel), the Romantics did not know about 'ecology'*per se*. However, they were aware of the "sacredness of nature" (27). To a certain extent, Blake's understanding of the human relationship to the land might be said to anticipate the "land ethic" famously articulated by the American environmentalist Aldo Leopold, whose naturalist philosophy "treats the good of the biotic community as the ultimate measure of the value of individual organisms or species, and of the rightness or wrongness of human actions" (31).

Kevin Hutchings firmly asserts that Blake's organic cosmology can offer green Romanticists and other literary ecocritics an interesting critical vantage point from which to consider the manifold implications of a contemporary concept of nature - "nature's economy" - that sought to describe all earthly entities as integral and interdependent parts of a dynamic, interactive system or whole (36). Blake was aware that the major symptoms of human corruption are social and natural environmental degradation (45). He was convinced that the pristine innocence of pastoral and rural life can spiritually and morally nurture and nourish a person. During the early days that Blake and his wife spent in Felpham, he praised country life in the highest of terms. In a letter to John Flaxman (21 Sept. 1800), Blake claimed that Felpham was a "more Spiritual" place than London, a place where the "Voices of Celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard & their forms more distinctly seen" (Bentley 2, 1540).

Writing a day or two later to Thomas Butts, Blake goes so far as to link this visionary aspect of Felpham directly to its natural landscape, expressing this connection in language that is reminiscent more of Wordsworth's writing than his own. As he told Butts, "the sweet air & the voices of winds, trees & birds & the odours of the happy ground" make Felpham "a dwelling for immortals" (Bentley 2, 1542). Further, in a letter he wrote to William Hayley in the spring of 1804, Blake suggests a direct correlation between the open country landscapes and the positive expansion of human intellect: "the country," he declars, "is not only more beautiful on account of its expanded meadows, but also on account of its benevolent minds" (Bentley 2, 1606). Coming from a habitual city dweller obsessed with mind-expanding visionary experience, such comments amount to high praise for the rural life, and it is a clarion call to return to the nourishing lap of our lovely nature.

Blake was intimately aware of the dehumanized forms of developments in various spheres of life. His concern for the adverse social implications of

England's urban industrialization is well known and it was certainly a transcendent vision. Thematically, both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are all but obsessed with human industry and technology (Hutchings 47). His 'Preface' to *Milton* is at once a denuniciation of the "dark Satanic Mills" of the Industrial Revolution and a joyous battle cry of determination to build "Jerusalem,/In England's green & pleasant Land" (Bentley 1, 318). It has been arranged as an anthem for church choirs, is widely used in a hymn setting, and was sung in London in 1945 election by the victorious Labour party (Guerin 53).

Blake was deeply aware of the existence of the bleeding victims in a progressive and industrialized world. Besides the unregulated exploitation of the earth's resources, he found enslavement - like the Albion Flour mill; and his " dark Satanic Mills" are at one level images of the oppression that haunts such wonders of English industry. Blake explicitly opposes the technology of the socially oppressive and " ecologically harmful industrial mill" (Hutchings 49). In ***The Book of Thel*** he bestows voice to such non-human entities as a Lilly, a Cloud, and a Clod of Clay, all of whom speak, in various ways of their relationship to a God who "smiles on all" creatures (1:19), wtether they occupy lofty or "lowly" places (5:1) in the cosmic hierarchy. Blake is willing to attribute even the highest linguistic capacity - the inspired faculty of prophecy itself - to non-human entities, asserting that "Trees on mountains" can speak "instructive words to the sons/ Of men" (*Mil* 26:7-10).

He was conscious of the eternal beauty implicit in all living forms. There is acute observation of birds, animals and insects in his writings. Only such an "inspired vision and a heartfelt feeling for the planet could lead anyone to a right use of the earth" (Beer 214). In Blakean view, the major linguistic predicament or problem of humanity is that we humans, in our fallen condition, are simply unequipped to understand these visionary and prophetic utterances:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.
(*Auguries of Innocence*)

Here is eternity compressed into a phrase a line up a stanza. With these lines Blake harnesses highly abstract metaphysical concepts such as "World" and "Heaven", "Infinity" and "Eternity" to mundane experiences of material nature. He represents spatial "infinity" as something that must be grasped in the human hand, thus advocating a necessary connection between the metaphysical realm and the body's experience in the natural world. Similarly, "Eternity" is

to be sought within the human experience of time - and not within the relative abstraction of an interminable lifetime - but in the more easily apprehensible (because much more mundane) experience of "an hour" (Hutchings 58). In Blake's view, the seeker after truth, rather than turning away from nature and the body, must seek salvation (i.e., Heaven) in the simplest natural objects, in such minute particulars as individual wild flowers and single grains of sand; for such particulars provide "the ultimate material starting points of Blake's visions" (Erdman 22).

One major aspect of Blake's living importance is that he compels us to realize fully and clearly what human resposibility means (Paley ed. 81). He has severe repugnance for all physical violence and bloodshed, including all military, ethnical and cultural violence. He writes in ***The Book of Thel*****,** "every thing that lives, / Lives not alone, nor for itself" (5:68-9): it certainly delineates his understanding of a singnificant and principal dynamic: the interconnection and interdependence of all entities. In many ways, his cosmological vision accords with Hans Jonas's view that "life is essentially relationship; and relation as such implies 'transcenence,' a going-beyond-itself on the part of that which entertains the relation" (Hutchings 62). His reiterated notion that "every thing that lives is Holy" (MHH 27,VDA 11) might be conceived as an affirmation of a vast holism that sees all entities as vitally interconnected and interdependent.

Blake's decentralization of cosmic authority implies a radical critique of traditional forms of hierarachy, a critique that has important philosophical implications not only for human society and government, but for human-nature relations as well. When we consider the following passage from ***Jerusalem***,

> *Generous immortal Guardian golden clad! for Cities*
> *Are Men, fathers of multitudes, and Rivers & Mountains*
> *Are also Men; every thing is Human, mighty! sublime!*
> *In every bosom a Universe expands...* (38:46-9),

the argument that "every things is Human", ubiquitous in Blake's canon, has important ethical consequences; for Judeo-Christian morality, as epitomized in the Old Testament's Decalouge, concerns itself exclusively with relationships between and among humans, or between humans and the God who created them in his own image. Arguably, Blake's radical expansion of the category of humanity involves an emphatic questioning of the traditional exclusivity. Despite its anthroporphism - or rather, because of it - Blake's cosmology provides a firm conceptual foundation for a spiritually pragamatic environmental ethic; for if all nature is considered human, the commandment "Thou Shall not Kill" must necessarily be generalized far beyond a narrow conception of humanity - to include literally "every thing that lives" (Hutchings 69). Thus, his belief

in the sacredness of every identity in the creation, and the admittance of the absolute value of individuality of every being (Schorer 448), gains an evergreen significance and lasting contemporaneity.

Blake's so called "defence of the distressed" (Nicoll 58) whether human or animal, is substantially relevant for our times. It is signficant to note that in denouncing cruelty to animals in such poems as *Auguries of Innocence*, he advocates humane treatment of animals of the basis of the holistic interdependence of all entities in the organic universe. In the interrelational cosmos that Blake envisions, the abuse of any living creature is necessarily symptomatic not only of pathology on the part of the abuser (who cannot be entirely isolated as such) but also of a structural pathology in the larger systemic whole (Hutchings 72). Blake's declaration that "A dog starvd at his Masters Gate / Predicts the ruin of the State" (*Auguries of Innocence*) can be thus best understood to partake in advance of the more contemporary critique of animal mistreatment and the movements for animal rights.

According to the logic of this aphorism, the dog's abused condition signifies not the master's individual culpability - the "ruin" of his own individual, immortal soul - but the culpability of the governmental or state structures that condone such cruelty by supporting an exclusively anthropocentric system of legislated rights. It is certainly a clarion call for the recognition of the natural rights of all nonhuman beings. In our own age of much discussed human rights, here is a true prophet, a Blake who saw much beyond all that - the necessity, the obligation, to respect and recognize the existential rights of everything that lives, everything that exists. In Blake's aphorism, the fact that a human "Master" owns the "starvd" dog in no way excuses the cruelty underpinning its abused condition. On the contrary, the dog takes on a strange agency, at odds with the notion of its subordinate status as an object of ownership, as the very consequence of its mistreatment: it actively and prophetically "Predicts the ruin of the State" whose capitalist system of ownership allows such abuses to occur with impunity (Hutchings 73).

Blake's disdain for homogeneous rule,"One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (MHH 24) suggests that the law's main problem is its inability to acknowledge and respect the particular otherness of individual creatures and contexts, human or otherwise. The regaining of such respect would perhaps provide the basis for an environmental ethic emphasizing "liberty", the best strategy respecting the rights of non-human creatures might involve merely letting such creatures "be" - or at least attempting to imagine them as such from a respectful, relatively unintrusive distance. Definitely, such, comprehensive concepts only confirm Blake's undying relevance in the contemporary debates

on ecology (Eaves 183). Blake is able to penetrate beyond the solitary transcendent dignity of humanity and his vision embraces the whole of creation, where each of us is assigned a sacred duty, a duty to love and care for one another, and for everything. It was his adamantine faith that.

...we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love
(*The Little Black Boy*)

Blake certainly realized that as human beings we are not the masters, but stewards of the earth, and we have a sacred responsibility to care for the earth and all that it contains. He speaks to us with a prophetic insight and challenges our own insensibility, greed and egocentricity, and exhorts us to be responsible residents of our fragile earth.

For Blake, a certain kind of anthropomorphism enables our ability to conceive of the "holiness" of non-human entities, and thus to treat even all non-human entities with love and respect. He says: "Think of a white cloud as being holy, you cannot love it but think of a holy man within the cloud, love springs up in your thought" *(Marginalia to Swedenborg)*. By considering Blake's discourse on the cloud in light of his famous claim that all things are human, we can being to imagine a radical extension of the idea of "holiness" to all entities, human or otherwise. He had a tender feeling and concern for "the spirit of a place" in the external landscape (Cork,www.questia.com). The rape of the landscape was something that Blake predicted in his visions, which would have far reaching consequences. As an antidote to this he advocated a sacred respect for the whole of nature. The potential respect for nature implicit in such a stance might offer a new perspective from which to consider the popular claims that Blake is an opponent of "tyranny in all its guises", and he is "deeply concerned with the disruption and transformation of hegemonic discourses" (Connolly 14).

While Milton, Blake's most influential poetic precursor, vows to work towards the liberation of all human life from slavery, Blake's radical humanism goes much further. An almost limitless expansion of the concept of liberty is apparent, for example, in the concluding lines of his 'Song of Liberty', wherein the poet asserts that "every thing that lives is Holy" (Bentley 1, 99). If we consider this quotation in relation to Blake's assertion that "every thing that lives, / Lives not alone, nor for itself" (*Thel* 5:68-9),we can understand that holiness and relationality - the defining attributes of all Blakean "life" - provide the conceptual bases for an environmental ethic that "would respect otherness as part of a whole in which one participates" (Hutchings 75).

He is perhaps one of the few poets who sees all temporal things under

a form of eternity, having a transcendental nature. Blakean eternity is ever in love with the productions of time. "All that lives is holy", means that everything has the dignity of meaning, as well as that particular "integrity of indestructible individuality" (Hagstrum 51). Blake is the supreme English mystic, who not only preaches for a sacred respect and reverence for the human beings, but for the entire universe. He calls for a greater reverence and sensitiveness to nature, and assigns a spiritual meaning to nature . Nature can teach us a good deal about man if we look at her minute particulars with the eye of imagination. If we are careful to gaze at her with the cleansed eye of the imagination, if we are ready to interpret and not to exploit, nature becomes a benevolent school of humanity. His intuitive, almost subcutaneous awareness of nature and non-human life enabled him to enjoy the living beauty of a living thing, to consecrate what is secular, and to recognize a present and presiding divinity in all things. He makes us conscious of the hidden wonder of our surroundings, and exhorts us to a communion with the environment, to feel a fellowship with all that lives, to cultivate a capacity to be stirred by nature.

He never loses sight of the common earth, the home of our being; he was not only so concerned about the sufferings of humanity, but even of every creature. The wild innocence of the hare, the liberty of the spider and the fly, are "precious parts of the human totality" (Blackstone 246); in endangering them we are endangering ourselves, and we shall not be spared of a just retribution:

Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
For the Last Judgment draweth nigh
(*Auguries of Innocence*).

It is a heartfelt call for a sacred respect for life - life in all its forms. It is mystics and poets who have most readily grasped the totality of nature in its profound meaning. They go on affirming that nature can be transformed and redeemed by a transformation of human thought. Blake was aware of the political and environmental dangers of reifying nature as the mere locus of material given for sheer exploitation.

He firmly believed that Nature can teach us many truths and ideals. From the Blakean perspective there springs a love and tenderness for flowers and birds, beasts and insects, which forbid the possibility of hurting them. A loving and minute observation shows us that each is "an immense world of delight" (MHH) into which we can enter and from which we can learn the lessons of hallowed individuality, energy and joy. Blake compels us to concede that happiness lies not in the good of man alone, but in the good of all. The tree, the insect and tapeworm, the lion and the flower - all are individuals, forms of thought, and they have their own sacred uniqueness. Any injustice done to

the least of these will be a crime done to the very heart of humanity itself:

Each outcry of the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear
(*Auguries of Innocence*).

These are intensely moving couplets, an ardent plea for a movement from hostility to hospitality. In a world embroiled in the ecological sins of pollution and exploitation, and several other impending environmental catastrophes, his is a voice crying out against the rape of the earth, our inner instinct for the annihilation of other species, and our unappeasable greed to exploit nature to the detriment of our own extermination. Here is a lasting Blake in a changing world. The Blakean visionary perception has a perpetual evocative magic, and it is a mystic wisdom that refuses to grow old with the passage of time. □

Abbreviations

MHH	:	Marriage of Heaven and Hell
Mil	:	Milton
Thel	:	The Book of Thel
VDA	:	Visions of the Daughters of Albion

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Women in Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy

* *Sr. K. Vijaya*

Vikram Seth just announced himself to the world as a poet with Mappings (1980) and poetry it is which constitutes a large part of his Oeuvre. Then he published two collections of poems entitled All You Who Sleep Tonight and Beasts Tales from Here and There (1991). Seth has combined his passion for poetry with novel and published his novel in verse, The Golden Gate. His reputation as a great writer has been strengthened by the publication of his novels The Suitable Boy, An Equal Music and Two Lives.

Women in the modern world go out to reach beyond the universe yet face many obstacles and barriers in this society i.e. due to family and religious backgrounds. Though the novel is written after independence, we still find the mentality of women the same. While commenting on A Suitable Girl Seth has quoted, "India has changed so much and yet so little" (Indo Asian News Service) and that is what he has portrayed through his characters, women have come out in all aspects of life, women still are not allowed to take any decision on their own. Seth has written this longest novel beautifully with many characters, especially women as he took inspiration from his own mother who became the first woman judge and later the first woman Justice of a State High Court. The novel shows Seth's knowledge over the Indian women's way of thinking and also his mastery over literature and the physical structure of India. In A Suitable Boy each woman takes a different role and plays her part meaningfully and

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shows her ability and capability. Seth has taken a lot of effort to bring out the best qualities of women in Independent India. We could admire the role played by a responsible widow Mrs. Rupa Mehra, the traditional souls Lata and Savita, the bold and beautiful girl Matati, the contemporary home maker Meenakshi, The beautiful Saeeda Bai, trustworthy person Kalpana, lovable girl Veena, Submissive Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor and cute girl child Aparna. This article deals with women of endurance, women of conformity and women of convictions.

Lata, the novel's heroine and her widowed mother, Mrs. Rupa Mehra, are the two most significant women on whom the main structure of the novel's ideas and themes rests. Lata is the ideal young woman – beautiful, educated, and above all sensible. Her choice of a husband is guided largely by good sense and practical wisdom. She may be said to represent all that is held in high esteem by Seth for it is through Lata that he projects the theme of sensibility in love, as it is only sound judgment that can take her to her cherished goal in a society and milieu that is undergoing tremendous change. Lata represents the purest form of human love which is one of Seth's major concerns. Her life of love does not exhibit strong passion or any kind of heedlessness, because Seth does not give it a heightened romantic effect to make it the central force of the story. She shows no reckless passion for her two boyfriends – Kabir Durrani and Haresh Khanna.

Seth seems to believe in Lata's surer guidance of the head and intuitive flashes of the mind, and avoids presenting a situation in which strong impulses threaten to sweep away rational faculties. Like Jane Austen's heroine Emma, Lata can just as well say "I am quite enough in love. I should be sorry to be more"(232). It is not enough to say that Lata is incapable of love; rather she is cool in both public and private life. Probably no heroine in fiction thinks more of her lover's intelligence than of his good looks as does Seth's Lata. She adopts a rational perspective of the young man's virtues and weaknesses. In a letter to Kabir, her poet friend, she writes in a controlled rational tone:

*I have your note…..I got your letter too when I was in Calcutta. It made me think over and remember everything. I am not annoyed with you in any way; please do not think so. But I feel that there is no purpose at all in our writing or meeting. There would be a lot of pain and very little point. (*ASB776*)*

She finally marries Haresh who is best suited to her and is approved of by her mother. She accepts him as her equal in status and superiority of intellect and wiser judgments. On the eve of her marriage, she does not indulge in idle romance but reflects on their life together. The honeymoon, too, is started on a note of sensibility. We are told that on

The morning after the wedding, Haresh suddenly decided over breakfast that since he happened to be in Brahmpur, he should look in on the local Praha factory. He kissed her and went of …. Lata walked over to the window and after a while looked out the bougainvillea, a little puzzled. This was a strange way to begin her married life. But then she thought about it and decided that it was just as well. (1348)

Seth may be said to employ the principle of the subtle symbolist who speaks in softer and surer tones without making overt gestures. Representing cool – headed passion, Lata succeeds in justifying her existence as the liberated woman of the 20th century who knows the ground she treads, surer of herself, in full command of her faculties. She outshines the conventional Indian female who is spiritually still in purdah. She is the Indian counterpart of the Western women who enjoy all the social freedom in matters regarding matrimony and at the same time instinctively knows where to draw the line between morality and licentiousness. The self- respect and the social grace which Lata enjoys is the epitome of her loyalty first of all to her own being. Emotional and intellectual faculties being well under full control, she never once strays from the code of conduct imposed by her mother, Mrs. Rupa Mehra – the symbol of authority.

Mrs. Rupa Mehra, mother of Lata, is a widow but responsible and courageous. She would like to lead her children according to her will and wish. As a mother she plays her role very strongly and firmly in spite of her widowhood. She also reveals her pain, the kind of suffering she undergoes whenever she attends a big social function like marriage as when she thinks about her dead husband, “If He had been here, I could have worn the tissue-patola sari I wore for my own wedding . . . . But it is too rich for a widow to wear”. (ASB3) Her condition of being a widow makes her pray for her daughter to have a good and long life with her husband: “May it be a longer one than mine, prayed Mrs. Rupa Mehra, May she wear this very sari to her own daughter’s wedding” (16). Seth has expressed his concern towards a widow and her prayer for her own daughter. She is a lovable mother as well as she is very firm in her decision. She reveals her responsibility when she talks to her younger daughter Lata during the wedding ceremony of her elder daughter Savita that,”I do know what is best. I am doing it all for you. Do you think it is easy for me, trying to arrange things for all four of my children without His help?” (ASB3)

Here Seth beautifully expresses the situation of a widow and her responsibility. Being a good and responsible mother she would like to keep her four children under her control especially Lata her youngest daughter. She is very strict in her nature thus she does not allow her children having relation-

ship with any interloper especially with Muslims. When she comes to know that her daughter is having relationship with a Muslim boy Kabir immediately she brought Lata to Calcutta with her where she would be away from Kabir and would forget him. She is so prejudiced against and hateful for Muslims that she thinks "it was one thing to mix socially with Muslims, entirely another to dream of polluting one's blood and sacrificing one's daughter" (197). She never allows her daughters taking decision on their own which she feels would later ruin their lives.

Mrs. Rupa Mehra is a typical Indian mother who does not bother about their likes and dislikes rather she would see only what is good and best for them and their family. She does not bother about her children's desire, whether her children appreciate her or not she does what is good for them. This we could see when Lata would like to participate in the annual day play of Twelfth Night, her immediate answer is "No . . . My daughter is not going to act in any play" (843). At the same time she would like to give her children what is useful, fruitful and meaningful. During Lata's marriage she bought a gift as a book called Ideal Marriage and gave to Lata to read and learn something about her forthcoming marriage, "This book will teach you everything about men" she says. (ASB1331) She is very bold and content with what she thinks and does. Her constant thought and her positive approach towards her children helps find Lata 'a suitable boy'. Though her daughter has a choice of three men finally her daughter herself makes a decision to marry Haresh, which pleases Mrs. Rupa Mehra. So, she regained her strength again turned her eyes towards her younger son Varun. During Lata's marriage she starts to motivate her son very confidently through these charming words that:

You too will marry a girl I choose, said Mrs. Rupa Mehra firmly to her younger son . . . A suitable girl that is what I want for you . . . That is what your Daddy would have wanted. A suitable girl, and no exceptions. (1343)

Seth shows that Mrs. Rupa Mehra is not only concerned about her daughters but she is also equally concerned about her sons. That is mother's nature. Widows of this world always live with the memory of their husbands and finish their duties towards their children, expected of them and which is exemplified by Lata's mother.

There are a number of women on Seth's huge canvas of characters. Apart from Lata and Mrs. Mehra, there is Savita (Lata's sister) and Malati (her best friend). The women are associated with family clusters – Veena Tandon, her mother Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor and her mother-in-law Mrs. Tandon; Zainab and Abida Khan, the women in the Naiwab's Muslim household; the fashionable Chatterji sisters, Kakoli and Meenakshi in Calcutta; and the courtesan Saeeda

Bai and her sister Tasreen. Seth portrays a patriarchal world where a visible or invisible, yet no less effective purdah shrouds the lot of women. Male heads of family such as Mahesh Kapoor and the Nawab of Baitar celebrate the ideal domestic space as that where men and women live within the specific roles delegated to them. They relegate their wives to a privatized 'domestic sphere' having little or no impact on the 'public' sphere in which they themselves participate. The older women confirm to these patriarchal expectations of the 'wife', 'mother', and 'window'.

Savita, the elder daughter of Mrs.Rupa Mehra, is very calm and adjustable type. She knows and understands her mother's pain and sufferings. She accepts her mother's decision and accepts wholeheartedly to marry Pran. She accepts the arranged marriage and does not pass any comments on her mother's decision/selection. She is very beautiful, obedient, and a dutiful daughter of Mrs. Rupa Mehra. Even she does not see her life partner. She sees him only during the marriage. She believes that whatever her mother does is good for her life. Seth has written that how the women like Savita accepts the will and wish of the mothers:

Savita is kind hearted, and accommodating though she was, she did have views of her own. Lata loved her deeply and admired her generous, even temper, the evenness was certainly a contrast to her own erratic swings of mood. Savita was free from vanity about her fresh and lovely looks.(ASB10)

But Lata was unable to accept this marriage and was wondering about her sister Savita and telling herself that, "Savita, it was true, would have been concerned about anyone who was suffering from anything" (14). Her husband looks very thin, block and sickly person but he is very good in nature. Savita accepts him as her life partner and leads a very happy married life. By nature she is very accommodative and receptive. She knows her mother's burden and does not want to upset her in any way. She has enough confidence on her mother. Seth expresses the view that beauty is not being handsome but should be handsome in their actions.

The lives of Seth's younger women are also enmeshed within a domestic space. Lata reacts within indignation when she reads that married women are not eligible for jobs in either the Indian Administrative Service or the Indian Police Service, and a woman might be required to resign from the service "in the event of her marrying subsequently"(458) The narrative is empathetic towards women who have been denied opportunities. Veena Tandon faces stiff resistance from her mother- in – law when she wishes to pursue her passion for classical music. Priya Goyal is S.S. Agarwal's daughter. She lives as part of

a joint family and is caught in an intolerable situation with her in-laws. Zainab is the Nawab's daughter, and another childhood friend of Veena's. She disappears into the world of the purdah after her marriage and silently suffers the infidelities of her husband. The world of the zenana becomes Zainab's complete world. She crosses the geographical line that lay between the mardana and the women's space of the zenana, and displays great courage in order to save her ancestral Baitar House from the Custodian of Evacuee Property. But having done so, she retreats back into an enclosure and remains on the periphery of the narrative. By describing restrictions enforced on women, Seth does to some extent problematises the inherent spaces allowed to women by patriarchal discourses. He does not however invest them with agency to act or to offer resistance. Seth may touch upon oppression of the woman within the institution of the Indian marriage, but his main focus is still on the lengthy descriptions of happy domestic scenes between the "sweet tempered, fair complexioned, beautiful Savita" (who is pregnant within a few months into her marriage) and Pran, "the first-class husband and son-in law". This is the Ideal Marriage that Lata must aspire to.

Lata's best friend Malati Trivedi is bold and outspoken. Seth allows us an insight into Malati's backround much before we come to know more about Lata so that Malati may function as a foil to Lata's own personality. Malati Trivedi is among the few girl students in a medical college of five hundred boys. She is notorious for her outspoken views; her participation in the activities of the student's Socialist Party; and her various love affairs. (27) The daughter of a surgeon, she also lost her father at a young age and the bond of paternal loss ties Lata and Malati together. However, unlike Mrs. Mehra, Malati's mother was concerned more "with what was right than what was convenient or approved of or monetarily beneficial" (27) Her mother teaches Malati and her sisters to be independent, and apart from schooling in Hindi medium, makes sure her daughters learn English as well as music and dance. Malati is in fact undergoing training in classical music under Ustad Majeed Khan. Malati's mother has also made it clear that her daughter would have to find her own husband. Malati has been brought up by women, in an atmosphere where men came to be "seen as exploitative and threatening". She believes that no one can come near the image she has of her father, and therefore keeps all men at a distance. (ASB27) Seth is sensitive to how a great deal in one's psychological make-up can be traced back to childhood experience. After Raghubir Mehra's death the Mehra family lived on the charity of friends and "the sense of uncertainty and the consciousness of obligation to others outside the family had its effect on them". Lata, for example, was "brought up by her mother "not to give trouble but to take trouble" (443) Savita is determined never to be in the same position

as her mother. When Pran develops a cardiac problem, Savita realizes that she cannot always live under a shadow of uncertainty and is determined to study law. Her father-in-law Mahesh Kapoor believes in women's education but does not believe in a woman working. (845) And tells Savita that she should concentrate on her duties as a mother. Surprisingly, Mrs. Kapoor demurs. And Savita continues to read her law books despite her father-in-law's reaction.

Malati had lost her adored father, a surgeon from Agra, when she was eight. grew up as a sort of boy. No one could touch the memory of her father. Malati was determined to become a doctor like him, and never allowed his instruments to rust. She intended one day to use them. (28) A best friend of Lata, she is a medical student who shares her room at the students hostel. Malati is very outgoing and never loses her tongue with strangers. She is a very talkative and humorous girl. Once she passes comments on Pran a university lecturer working in the English Department who is Lata's brother-in- law "Well, he is looked rather beast – like whenever I've seen him on the university campus. Like a dark giraffe" (8) Malati is not suppressed by society like most of the other women characters in the novel. On the contrary, she can be convincing whenever she wants. For example, when Pran faints during a lecture, being a medical student, Malati takes hold of the situation and "the boys, startled at the authority in the voice of this strange girl, stood back a little" (ASB857) They are startled because they are not used to such behaviour from a woman. They are startled because Malati is a 'new' woman. She frightens people who are not used to such freedom and independence. Varun is made uncomfortable when she flirts with him just for fun, Mrs Rupa Mehra is constantly disturbed by her for her influence on Lata. For instance, it is Malati who encourages and persuades Lata to take part in a Shakespearean play. Mrs. Rupa Mehra was convinced that Malati Trivedi, with her dangerously attractive greenish eyes, must have Kashmiri or Sindhi blood in her, so far, however, she had not discovered any. (27) Malati was charming, dressed conservatively but attractively, and could talk to Mrs. Rupa Mehra about everything from religious facts to cooking to genealogy, matters that her own Westernized children showed very little interest in. She was also fair, and enormous.

Saeeda Bai is an independent and trustworthy person though she is introduced as a prostitute and a very good singer. She loves her position in the society and makes everyone happy. She is very content with what she is and comfortable with all men who come to her life. She is also very sensitive and positive in her dealings with everyone. She meets many men in her life but falls in love with Mann, the son of a politician. She knows very well that ~~Mann loves her because she is very attractive and a very good singer above~~

all she belongs to the Muslim community. He used to meet her often and used her for his own purpose. She understands that he cannot marry her though she loves him and is concerned about him. With a generous heart she advises him to accept his parents' proposal for his marriage. Saeeda Bai's good heart reveals about her nature through this dialogue between Mann and Saeeda Bai. "And why should I marry? . . . In fact I sometimes wonder what you see in an old woman like me. You must get married. . . You cause your parents so much pain" (303 - 304) She is also an independent person and is not afraid of the society. She enjoys her freedom being a singer.

Seth has introduced many women characters in his novel and it shows how much concern and respect he has given towards women. So, women of strong, women of conformity and women of conviction are portrayed as having their own qualities. All these characters are needed to this male dominant society to keep peace of mind and unity in the family and the society. Women are created as very strong and sensitive, lovable and responsible, confident and determined as they realize their potential and the special power within themselves. All these women must understand and be aware of their original beauty within themselves than the outer beauty.

Tradition and unconventionality move side by side in Seth's fiction. In registering social changes with great force and fulfilling the role of the novelist who has a firm grip on society, his women characters are in search of perfect adjustments and harmony in domestic as well as in social life. □

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The Predicament of the Black as a Racial -Minority: A Study of Richard Wright's - *The Long Dream*

* K.M.Arun,

Richard Wright is one of the first African American writers, who won a large White as well as Black readership. He indicted racism, and wedded his protest against social injustice to an existentialistic philosophy. Wright's expanded metaphysical concerns matched his political preoccupations with the efforts of peoples in developing nations to throw off colonial domination. The rationale for his support lay in his discovery of the intellectual and spiritual affinity with non-White people. His most significant achievement as a writer was his ability to render the particulars of his victim characters. He powerfully chronicles the historical injustices, physical abuse and emotional degradation that Black Americans have suffered.

In Wright's fiction, as in his own life, characters respond to such outrages first with rebellion and finally with flight, because escape alone seems to offer a real alternative. The various philosophical positions Wright assumes in his work spring from his hunger to see the African American's experience as a metaphor for the modern human condition. The symbolic import of Black people rests on their outcast status in relation to the dominant White culture. Denied of their own identities by the racist premises determining their lives, and precluded from entering the culture on any other terms, they become metaphysical outlaws estranged from the moral codes of society and continually testing the limits of individual moral freedom in search of self-definition. Wright's fictions, from **Native Son** to **The Long Dream**, employ criminal melodrama not only because of the taste Wright developed from his early days, but also because the tales of violent crime dramatize his vision of modern human's existence in a godless universe.

The Long Dream features a relationship between the White and the Black of the south is divided by a line drawn by the ruling Whites. **The Long Dream** portrays the improvement in the life style of the Blacks in Mississippi.

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For a reader to understand the nature and suffering of the Black rebel hero in Wright's all other novels, it is enough to know the character portrayed in The Long Dream. Wright presents vividly the initiation of the Black rebel in a hostile environment. Katherine Fishburn gives us a clear picture of this Black hero:

…carefully documented from Wright's own experiences The Long Dream is a ritualized account of a Black boy's initiation into the two conflicting worlds of the blacks and whites, a ceremony that members of both races participate. Indeed, a major portion of character development or more accurately character malformation is affected by the Black on their own kind. (14-15)

The Long Dream is a protest novel that strongly condemns racism. In this novel, one can come across humiliating circumstances and situations in which the hero suffers from alienation. The sufferings in the society mix very deep into the mind of Fishbelly Tucker, a young Black hero, simultaneously describes how he shows his emotions to free play against his White oppressors. Like all his other novels, Wright protests against the horrors of the White society, which initiates the innocent protagonist to become a revolt. The White people always maintain a gap, so there is no communication between these two peoples. The central character of **The Long Dream** is a victim of the society that refuses to accept him as a human being at all. Wright profoundly figures out the moral, physical and psychological growth of the Black hero in a southern town, where lynching, police brutality, and race riots are very common. The young, Black rebel is found to be at the mercy of the environment, and his actions are all conditioned by nature and society. Wright explores what is likely to grow up in the south as a Black male. **The Long Dream** is the story of the brutality, frustration and the physical escape and personal hope of the Black in this crude environment. Katherine Fishburn analyzes the state of the hero in the following terms:

Since Fish is forced to encounter and live with this tension, he becomes, like the other Wright heroes, an absurd hero, a man in quest of meaning and identity. Where this search takes him is the content of ***The Long Dream****. Its narrative pattern is the ritual of initiation. Fish is undergoing the same rituals that generations of Black youth before him have experienced*. (16)

The novel is divided into three parts. The first two sections of the novel deal with the lives of both the Black father and his son. The third section deals only with the son, Fishbelly. He is separated from his father and left alone in a circumstance where he cannot get any kind of help either from the Black society or from the White society. [The title of the novel very much of Dreams of the protagonist, they are "Day Dreams and Night Dreams", "Days and Nights"

and “Waking Dream”.] These titles illustrate the tension of the hero between desire and reality. The core of the novel revolves around a single idea: the blacks have fallen prey to their environment. It also centers on the relationship between the father and son, which Wright had never experienced in his life. Tyree Tucker, protagonist’s father, is a businessman who maintains his wealth and the safety of his family by bribing the police and the mayor. Constance Webb explains his submission to the environment very clearly: “All the while that he amasses a fortune, he plays the role demanded by his environment” (361). The central character Rex (Fishbelly) Tucker, has a wrong opinion about his father as a coward until the fire accident in the grove, which is owned by Tyree. The Whites, who have a share in the house of prostitution, decide that Tyree should go to jail to silence the protesting society. But Tyree decides not to be the scapegoat. He cunningly plays with the police chief, Mr.Cantley, by hiding the cancelled cheques he has given out as bribes. After this Fish sees through his father’s cunning nature and his opinion about his father changes at this point. He is very firm to follow his father’s code of ethics and morality after he is murdered by the police. Unable to do anything he gives up his father’s way of living and escapes to the north to take a plane to Paris.

The novel portrays the Black hero’s reaction against each situation in a racist White society. It starts when the hero is only six, and the hero matures through years of experience in a morbid environment. The environmental factors which affects Fishbelly include mainly the sexual taboos, lynching, alienation, and the most important of all police brutality. Fishbelly absorbs the value of the society from abnormal conditions of life. Fishbelly first understands the sexual taboo in the racist society through the death of his friend Chris Sims, who is a Black bellhop at a local hotel. He is seduced by a White prostitute who lives there, and after exploiting the black, she complaints against him that he has violated her. The White folks capture him and mutilate him. This is the scenario of the society, where a Black man cannot have sex with a White woman. After the death of Chris Sims, Fish is instructed by his father, Tyree Tucker, not to face a White woman at all. Fishbelly senses his father’s fear against the White society. Being denied of their opportunity blacks have to live in bad conditions. Wright in **The Long Dream** shows how some Black characters who accidently happen to enter White man’s territory are accused of trespass, and subjected to severe psychological torture. The Blacks have been relegated to an inferior status in a White society and they are denied equal rights and opportunities.

Fishbelly is shocked to realize the miraculous power of the money of his father, when he arranges for his immediate bail. Afterwards all his actions are motivated by a desire to make money. After giving up his studies, he joins

his father's business. He only wants to make enough dollars in life. Tyree's wealth and property are seriously threatened by the fire accident in the grove. He would rather die than lets his property be picked clean by whites. Fishbelly's personal freedom is realized, preserved and fulfilled only in dreams. In reality the society is adamantly opposed to the Black males. His desire for equality will become true only in dream. Fish is indeed an innocent and shy Black boy in the beginning, but in the end, he is found to be a robust cosmopolitan as Wright himself became when he went to Paris. Fish's affluent family life does not prevent him from gaining an insight into acuteness of racial oppression nor is he aware of corruption as an evil one. As he grows into a man he gains an ironic insight and realizes that corruption is the only common ground where blacks and whites can meet. Dreams play an important part in this novel. Fish's development is portrayed in a sequence of dreams. He begins to dream about sexual relations with White girls. Fish prefers not to live in the world that dictates his way of life. He is a man riddled with self-loathing, consumed by disgust for his own race, and paralyzed with the dread of a racist White society.

Wright's accounts of Fish's experience at the hand of whites will reveal the social inequality. One time, when Fish is six years old, he is making his first trip alone in the street; he is accosted by a White man. His mind feels to run but then the White men's behavior frightens him. The White man says, "these Black people are born with luck." Fish rolls the dice and when he has rolled up thousand dollars, the White man thrusts a dollar into Fish's hand asks him to run away. This incident makes an ironic tone and establishes the theme of fragmentation of Black personality. Wright carefully incorporates a more serious racial discourse towards the end of the novel. In his last letter to Fish, Zeke argues, "If somebody would prove to me that god's White I don't think I would ever go to church no more" (372). To Wright, **The Long Dream** is an intimate description of how Black boys in the American South react to what is taught to them at school, by the press, in the Church, and in their homes. Though they are black, they react positively to the dominant values of the White World, in the matter of sex and money. Wright describes the police brutality, which marks an important role in transforming Fish's personality. Fish was arrested by the White police when he is engaged in a mud fight. During their way to the police station, Fish becomes aware of the sexual boundaries between a Black man and a White woman. After having an agonizing feeling in the jail, Fish starts looking at the world in a different way. He comes to the conclusion that White men are never being trusted. Fish thinks that violence and murder are the right way to face the Whites.

~~**The Long Dream** illustrates that Richard Wright has aged in indignation~~

and developed a more penetrating satire than ever, but it proves most of all that he would quench the violence set off in him by his overriding sense of fire. Fishbelly succeeds in hiding secrets from the whites that his father cannot do. He keeps it for vengeance against the whites for his father, who has suffered at the hands of the White villains. But getting into an adult Black man Fishbelly gets his own maturation, development and better understanding the nature of the White folks. Fish is unable to avoid facing the fact that his father used the same racist system that oppressed him to oppress his fellow blacks. Wright implies that the Black community is in a long dream and that it is refusing to face the ultimate futility of all responses to White racism. Fish, who has been Tyree's understudy, has been preparing to manage his father's business, as a funeral director, a rent and graft collector, a whorehouse investor. Fish realizes how fully he has now inherited the enterprises when he awakens to find no difference between his nightmares and the pedestrian world. Cantley's fear is now focused on Fish because he correctly assumes that there may be more cancelled checks and that Fish may have them. Cantley has framed and jailed Fish on a false charge of raping a White woman–an irony. Fish has frequently imagined such a rape and Cantley keeps Fish in jail for two and a half years. Again ironically the system of intimidation that Cantley has used for power and profit precludes his discovering the truth about Fish's ownership of the checks. Fish is uncertain that Cantley would kill him if he admits to the possession of the checks, doggedly denies knowledge of them and continues to languish in jail, when Cantley stops his search for the checks and Fish is let out of jail, he flees north to Memphis, to New York city and then to Europe to join his old friends who are the Americans stationed in France. Fishbelly is another "native son" who is rejected by the same world that made him.

After his father's death, Fish is totally estranged from both the White and the Black societies. He becomes a victim to the demands of the society and in order to serve he has to play the role of Tyree which he has played all through his life. Fish's decision to go to France echoes the twin traits of the American's national character, individual freedom and the pursuit of happiness, as guaranteed in the constitution. For Fish, leaving Mississippi for Paris means leaving a society where sex and race are intertwined and where Black people are treated as other than human. Unable to live against his oppressors, he accepts his defeat and ends up his long dream. **The Long Dream** also shows the rotten state of the society in which bureaucracy suffers from under its own weight of red-tapism, bribery, corruption and selfishness. Fishbelly is a victim in the society of open violence and police brutality. He is a refugee in his own land and hence he seeks asylum in France, a paradise for an idealist, who

believe in peace, love, equality and brotherhood. Wright points out in **The Long Dream** that environment plays an important role in changing a Black male into a rebel. **The Long Dream** can be viewed as a detailed account of the Black rebel's inability to escape from a culture of the White supremacy, from which Fishbelly cannot free himself even after residing in France. Michael Fabre clearly points out, this problem by quoting Wright's speech in **The World of Richard Wright**, "Mississippi is only an immense Black ghetto, a vast prison where the whites are the jailors and the blacks are the prisoners" (82).

Fish was initially ruined by his father's overly protective love. Further, he destroyed himself through his own love of the White world and its temptations. When he saves his life by escaping to France, he has no concrete ideas of how to either accept his past or love of himself. As early as his childhood, Wright could find little love in his own people, and he surely found little in whites. It is not surprising, then although it is disappointing that Wright leaves his last hero literally up in the air. Fish comes to realize his manhood in a racist society when he is arrested for a false case of attempted rape. After his release from the jail, he knows that he cannot rise as long as he remains in America. He is ashamed of the world, which is arrogantly brutal, oppressive, to a young innocent boy. Wright's philosophy is based on a single idea, that all men are evil and the whites are more evil. The nature of the black's life is determined by the White society where they live. He has no choice between necessity and freedom as long as he lives in a White racist society. □

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The Self and the Community in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

* C. Palanivelrajan

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Autobiography has a long, well-established history in the African-American letters. In fact, autobiography has always been the principal mode which black Americans used to convey their views of their relationship with American society.Angelou has used the autobiographical genre as a resource for self-analysis. Like most black women writers, she has used this historical art form as a means of self-expression and self-evaluation. This self-analysis gets complete with Angelou's realization and acceptance of the growth, development and change in her life. Her works analyze her past, present, and also the future to give a complete and true picture of her life.

This task of hers is made with a little more difficulty by the 'double jeopardy' of being black and female in America. She inspires, amuses and gives strength to many women and men by her works. Her life had been a big struggle many a time; but her motto: "you may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated" (*Conversations with Maya Angelou* 96), has made her overcome all the difficulties in her life.

Female struggle for liberation had also been achieved gradually, when the women fought with courage; and their pride played an important role in their achievements. Commenting on the subject matters of African-American autobiography, Dolly A. McPherson remarks:

Black writers have tried, by the use of autobiography and, to a lesser degree, other literary modes, to examine themselves and articulate their findings, not only in an effort to celebrate their unique experiences, but also to explain their situation to that group of the society, which could, if it chose, alter the conditions of the writers' lives. (1)

Maya Angelou is one of the most eloquent successors of the African-American women's autobiographical tradition. She was born on April 4, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri to Bailey Johnson, and Vivian Baxter Johnson; and promi-

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nently known as an author, poet, singer, songwriter, actor, playwright, and film director. She is best known for her series of autobiographies, the first volume being published in 1970. In January, 1993 Maya Angelou was given the honor of reading her poem *"On the Pulse of Morning"* during the inaugural ceremony of Bill Clinton's presidency.

The mission of her autobiography is to show how society violated her as a young African- American female. When she was three, her parents got divorce and sent Angelou and her brother Bailey from California to Arkansas on a train with tags on their wrist. They were raised by their stoic grandmother and then sent back to their carefree mother. At the age of eight, she was raped by her mother's 'live-in' partner. **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** clearly conveys the physical pain of the sexual assault; guilt and shame of rape made her not to reveal her mental anguish to others. Her timidity and fear of telling magnify the brutality of the rape. For more than a year after the incident, she lived on self-imposed silence, speaking very rarely.

This childhood rape recalls the pain of African-American women suffered on being victimized by racism and sexism. The novel conveys the painful act of being born a black girl in the South during the Depression. After the end of slavery, some black men assumed the position of the old white masters, and became the black women's new sexual exploiters. They vented their anger and abused black women, who occupied subordinate position in patriarchal society.

Maya Angelou wrote **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** to express the hardships of growing up a black woman in the time of racism and hatred. In this autobiography, she tells howthe racists are against her and her family, along with every other black furthermore, to be a girl is awfully tragic in the racist society. Angelou brings out the narrative of her very young days with stories that depict the humiliation and struggles resulting from the racism then practiced. Angelou recounts; how difficult for working African- Americans to survive in an economically depressed and racially oppressed community. Maya struggled by both racial and gender adversities.

The initial lines of the book, **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** are a poem, which Maya recitesin the church on Easter Sunday, "What are you looking at me for? I didn't come to stay" (1), these lines prefigure the entire work. Angelou disarmingly portrays the pathetic and humorous scenes like, the opening glimpse of her self-forgetting lines and wetting her pants in her earliest effort at public speech, reminds us that the black Americans survive the painfulness of the life by the tender stabilities of family and community. As

she hurries from the church, trying to escape from the humiliating situation; peeing, crying and laughing all at the same time.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings focuses on the concept of black skin, and the emotions and fears that come along with it.Maya's life was never easy. From the time of her birth, Maya Angelou was subjected to racism, rape, grief and dehumanization. She bared enough emotional stress, in her life time that most people never experience in their lifetime. Yet, she survived. She forced herself to become stronger, and in doing so, she produced writings, which helped others to become strong. Her experiences and the lessons she learned gave her confidence to be a teacher, preacher, and a source of inspiration to millions.

There are a number of episodes in which Maya and Momma Henderson disagree with white folks and their treatments. The most dramatic scene is therural white girls, who stand in front of Momma's store and taunt her, like the three witches in **Macbeth**. One of the "powhitetrash" girls brazenly exposes her private parts to the God-fearing Momma. Symbolically the adolescent is displaying her white sexuality before Annie Henderson, a black woman, and store owner, who is unable to respond except through passively humming spiritual hymns. Maya was furious at her grandmother's compliance, and she believes that she could blow away the problem with a powerful rifle.

Maya confronts the insidious effect of racism and segregation in America at a very young age. She internalizes the idea that blond hair is beautiful and that she is far black girl trapped in a nightmare.Stamps, in Arkansas, is so thoroughly segregated that as a child Maya does not quite believe that white people exist. As Maya gets older, she is confronted by more overt and personal incidents of racism, such as a white speaker's condescending address at her Mary, and a white dentist's refusal to treat her. The importance of Joe Louis' world championship boxing match to the black community reveals the dearth of publicly recognized African-American heroes. It also demonstrates the desperate nature of the black community's hope for vindication through the athletic triumph of one man.

Maya falls in love with reading, especially William Shakespeare, though she feels a bit guilty about it, because Shakespeare was a white man. She writes, "During these years in Stamps,I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare. He was my first white love." (13). Racism was rampant and being a black woman Maya had to suffer in two ways. First of all, she had to defend herself against racism, and secondly being a woman, she had to suffer a lot in the society. So it was an extreme adversary condition that was prevailing then.

"A cage, as Georgia Douglas Johnson warns us, restrains not only the Black body but also the female Black body; a Black woman is doubly threatened because of her race and her gender" (Lupton 67).

She had to do all the works in the field and at the same time had to take care of all domestic chores. The black women were totally engaged, since they had to yield to the demands of not only the black men but also the white men every now and again. This was the grim reality of the black women of those days. The theme of racism is very much reflected in Angelou's most writings. This novel is not an exception; the major themes that are developed in the novel are racism and sexism.

Born at a crucial time in the American history, young Maya struggled for acceptance both as a black and as a woman. Fortunately for her, she has the determination to see both struggles through to the end. Selwyn R. Cudjoe commented that Angelou's autobiographies rescue not only her personal history, but the collective history of all the black women:

The autobiography, therefore, is objective and realistic in its approach and is presumed generally to be of service to the group. It is never meant to glorify the exploits of the individual, and the concerns of the collective predominate. One's personal experiences are presumed to be an authentic expression of the society, and thus statistical evidences and sociological treaties assume a secondary level of importance. Herein can be found the importance of the autobiographical statement in Afro-American letters. (10)

Once Maya suffered from toothache, then she was taken to a dentist by Momma. They approached Dr.Lincoln, a white dentist in the town. During the Great Depression, Momma loaned money to him, with help of which he developed his clinic. But they were shocked, when he stated that he never treat black patients. The dentist says, "Annie, my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's" (184). This makes Momma angry and she asks for the interest on the loan, which was already given to him by her. Then, Momma takes Maya to a black dentist in Texarkana.

For African-Americans in general, Maya notes, naming is a sensitive issue because it provides a sense of identity in a hostile world that aims to stereotype blacks and erase their individuality and identity. Consequently, given the predominance of pejoratives like nigger so often used to cut down blacks, Maya makes a mention of the danger to be incurred by calling a black person anything that could be loosely interpreted as insulting. During a brief time when she was agedeleven, Maya worked in the home of Mrs. Viola Cullianan, a

wealthy transplanted Virginian. With the arrogance of a Southern White woman who does not have to respect a black person either by custom or by tradition, Mrs. Cullianan insults Maya by calling her Mary rather than Marguerite, a name that she considered too cumbersome.

Mrs. Cullianan's attempts to change Maya's name for her own convenience, echoes the larger tradition of American racism that attempts to prescribe the nature and limitations of a black person's identity. In refusing to address Maya by her own name, the symbol of the individuality and uniqueness, Mrs. Cullianan refuses to acknowledge her community. A sensitive, reflective nature, combined with an alert intelligence, enables Maya to comprehend the nature of this insult. She writes:

Every person I knew had a hellish horror of being "called out of his name." It was a dangerous practice to call a Negro anything that could be loosely construed as insulting because of the centuries of their having been called niggers, jigs, dinges, blackbirds, crows, boots and spooks. (106)

These unjust social realities confine and demean Maya and her relatives. She comes to learn how the pressures of living in a thoroughly racist society have profoundly shaped the character of her family members, and she strives to surmount them. **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** is an autobiographical novel about the early years of Maya Angelou's life. The autobiography explores the isolation and loneliness faced by Angelou, and the attributes of her character that helped her to cope with the prejudices of society. Quite graphic in nature, the text deals with the issues like childhood, rape, racial protest and sexism.

The speech delivered by the white speaker, to the audience in a racist manner, makes Angelou realize how terrible it is to have so little control over her life. She also skillfully recreates those psychic, intellectual and emotional patterns that identify her individual consciousness and experience, which are highly exemplified in the graduation scene.

It was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my color with no chance of defense. We should all be dead. I thought Ishould like to see us all dead, one on top of the other…. As a species, we were an abomination. All of us. (176)

Though, the blacks have every potential to excel like the other race, yet they were crushed at every stage of their growth. Young blacks attending grade school graduation are humiliated by a white dominated world of limited,

circumscribed expectations.

Maya at her young age, tried to relate the boxing match of Louis and the white boxer with that of her community's fight against the whole white community. Maya along with several other people of her race was keenly observing the boxing match. The importance of Joe Louis' world championship boxing match to the black community reveals the dearth of publicly recognized African- American heroes. At one point, the announcer of the boxing match said that Louis was in the corner taking a beating. Maya felt that it was very bad of him and a serious insult to her community. She writes:

My race groaned. It was our people falling. It was another lynching. Yet another Black man hanging on a tree....This might be the end of the world. If Joe lost, we were back in slavery and beyond help. It would all be true, the accusation that we were lower types of human beings. Only a little higher than the apes. (131)

It also demonstrates the desperate nature of the black community's hope for vindication through the athletic triumph of one man. Louis' loss would mean the "fall" of the race and thewhite return to the idea that they have rights to denigrate the black people. Cynics might say that Louis' win does little more that stave off the black community's psychological despair. It does not turn the tables on the whites because there is no denying that the whites still hold all the power.

Racism plays many psychological games with blacks and whites, and perhaps the Louis' public recognition helps to teach both whites and blacks to accept African-Americans are equals to the whites. This fight determined how blacks were looked at from then on. If Louis lost, the blacks would be thought of as lower than the whites.

Another instance of the racial protest in *Caged Bird* is her struggle to find equalopportunity in the working world. The whites did not allow colored people work on the streetcars and Maya wanted to do a job as a conductorette at the Market Street Railway Company. Not only Marguerite fights for equal rights to do a job but also battle against racism. With this defining movement in her life, Marguerite takes all that she has learned from the community of woman and synergies this knowledge to get the job that she wants. She uses her education, self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-identity, and self-reliance to push through the discrimination and racism placed before her from this white dominated patriarchal society.

The Market Street Railway Company had an opening for a conductor-

ette, and Marguerite decides to apply for the position, when her mother gets upset with her skipping school. When Marguerite goes to apply for the job, she meets a lot of resistance from the secretary in the hiring manager's office. Marguerite is after all a black; and the secretary, with the Southern accent is a white:

This miserable little encounter had nothing to do with me, theme of me, any more than it had to do with that silly clerk. The incident was a recurring dream, concocted years before by stupid whites and it eternally came back to haunt us all. The secretary and I were like Hamlet and Laertes in the final scene, where, because of harm done by one ancestor to another we were, bound to duel to the death. Also because the play must end somewhere….Her Southern nasal accent sliced my meditation and I looked deep into my thoughts. All lies, all comfortable lies. The receptionist was not innocent and neither was I. The whole charade we had played out in that crummy waiting room had directly to do with me, Black, and her, white. (260)

Maya's mind raced with different thoughts on how to handle this situation. If Marguerite wants the job she has to be persistent with her efforts. She engages the Negro organizations to help her out with this problem, but most of them turned her down. The Negro organizations, which are run by men, did not understand why Marguerite wanted this particular job when there were so many factory jobs available due to the war. They were reluctant to help her.

Though Marguerite was angry that the management team at the railway office was snubbing her, and her own community didn't support her efforts. Marguerite didn't let her anger overcome her rational thought. However, she would not take now for an answer and pursued the job anyway."I WOULD HAVE THE JOB. I WOULD BE A CONDUCTORETTE AND SLING A FULL MONEY CHANGER FROM MY BELT. I WOULD" (260).

Maya goes on to get the job and be the first black woman conductor on the San Francisco Trolley. Angelou's autobiographies show a relationship between the self and the cultural environment. Through her episodic recreation of individuals, family, and community displacement, as objective experiences of racial oppression, her writings illustrate the consequences of racial persecution in contemporary American society. Dolly A. McPherson remarks:

A study of the work of Maya Angelou, autobiographer and poet, shows how the writer uses autobiography to define her quest for human individuality, identifying her personal struggle with the general condition of Black Americans and claiming a representative role not only in relation to Black Americans, but

also in relation to the idea of America. Thus, through a study of her work, one gains a closer access to American cultural history. (5)

The novel seems to be like a kaleidoscope; and looking through it one could see the life story of a young black girl, the history of America, and the elements of racial protest and sexism, and other disruptive forces. There lies the success of the author who showcases her talents and discusses a variety of themes through a piece of art. In that aspect, the novel is a sublime creation, which brings about a mosaic of themes and ideas. □

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SEARCHING FOR SELF IN SASHI DESHPANDE'S *MOVING ON*

* Ms.P. Sudhalakshmi

Indian writing in English in the recent years has achieved greater significance in India and abroad. As a consequence of the developments, it enjoys a unique reputation, prestige and decorum in the world of English studies and today, the writings of several Indian English writers have been prescribed in the syllabi of many Indian and foreign universities.

India is gifted with great many writers like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Amit Chaudhuri, Arun Joshi, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth who has heralded a new vision, thought and track in both theme and style. In the past, the male writers had a general conception that, a "woman is innately weak, emotional, enjoys dependence, is limited in capacities for work" (Horney:231). This perception has been changed in our society to some extent, when Indian women started screening their identity through different ways. One of the ways is through writing and most Indian women writers prefer 'fiction' to vocalize themselves than other forms of self expression in writing.

In the post Independence era, several Indian English women writers

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such as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy have concentrated on self-identity and their struggle. One such writer is Sashi Deshpande who expresses the modern women's expedition towards freedom. She writes a variety of Indian English that is rooted in the ambience of regional cultures, and concentrates on the aspects of feminism, which reflect the confident, new-found individual voice of the Indian women. She speaks of the self of the suppressed voices – those of middle-class women trapped between the conflicting demands of traditional expectations of a woman's role and the search for self-fulfillment and identity.

Deshpande, a post-colonial woman writer, struggles to overturn patriarchal, racist ideologies, and systems of representation not only in an international context, but also at home in subverting and deconstructing indigenous male writings and tradition. The major themes of her fiction are man-woman relationship, human desires, longing, gender discrimination, marginalization, rebellion and protest.

Deshpande's novels also depict socio-cultural life in the modern, urban, post-colonial India. Her novels contextualize women's quest for liberation from the male-dominated society, self-assertion and autonomy. **Moving On** is a story of a middle-aged woman, who struggles to come out of the patriarchal norms of the Indian society. She neither leaves out the patriarchal conventions nor the struggles the protagonist faced. She has taken the readers to the inner psyche of Jiji and the selfhood which Jiji attains after a long walk of her life. The novel explores the search of a woman to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother.

In this novel Deshpande portrays two first person narratives, by Jiji and Baba, who tell their own stories from their point of views. She uses the stream of consciousness technique, in which, Manjari (Jiji), a premature widow comes back to her father to look after him as he is counting his days.

The world has changed from tradition to the present trend, where men and women seem to be equal. A woman unearths herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of 'the other' of men and reduce her to the status of inferior. She struggles in the contemporary society "to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human being…" (Amur:10). Jiji is also such a woman who struggles to be an autonomous person and live her life with self-identity.

Jiji, being a widow, leads her life on her own without anybody's help. She strives a lot in the male-dominated society and realizes that if she does not protest, she cannot survive to fulfill her own wishes in the world. Deshpande, like most other novelists in India, tries to change the conventions of the society. She has aptly justified in her "Writing and Activism":

. . . the writer wants to change society, to protest against the injustice, to rebel against existing wrongs, to set the world right and so on (Deshpande:23).

Deshpande craves her protagonists to assert their self against the injustice. They attain 'self-realization' by their own personal experiences which make them to realize their authentic self, the society, and what they need or expect from their society. As a responsible writer, she has never showed her protagonists inferior, in any aspect. Jiji is such a character, who does not want to feel her womanhood as inferior, but different as Deshpande herself points out in her essay "Why I am Feminist". She makes it clear that to be a feminist does not necessarily mean to want to be like a man, but to accept one's womanhood as a positive gift and not as a 'lack' and to affirm that one is different, not inferior.

Manjari's narration makes the readers to know about the first hand experience of Manjari, her inner knowledge about herself, which makes her to be independent, and to view her life from her own point of view. Jiji, from her stand point and from her father's diary, gives the readers a live picture of Mai. Jiji, in her childhood, was affectionate towards her family. Her family was her world. She would do anything for her parents and her sister, Malu. They were affectionate sisters.

From Jiji's remembrance of past, it is realistically portrayed how Malu always became important to everyone, even to Jiji. She never felt complete without Malu. Malu was an important character in their family. Jiji was treated as the son of the family whereas Malu,as the delicate daughter. In this regard, Jiji says:

I was strong, while she was delicate; I was practical and she was dreamy and absent-minded. I was the son of the family, the tough one, while Malu was the daughter, the gentle and to be protected. In fact, Baba and I were the protectors who looked after Malu and Mai or so we thought (41).

Jiji, in her youth became a revolutionary girl in that she did not give importance to wealth but attributed value to human sentiments. She fell in love with Shyam, a cinematographer. She did not want to elope with Shyam, but she stood stubbornly against her mother's will. According to her, true love could survive and flourish for a long time. She was ready to sacrifice anything for Shyam, even her lovable parents. Love for Shyam was so strong that made Jiji hate Mai and Mai's liking for her hair.

Jiji wanted to be an individual in deciding her marriage. When her parents opposed her marriage she was stubborn enough to go on her own way. Jiji boldly cut her hair irregular short by herself to show her protest against Mai. Deshpande's protagonists show their animosity towards their mothers

by refusing to toe their line in many aspects. Deshpande suggests that active and independent participation of women in this society is the road to female emancipation.

Liberation of self is necessary for every human being. Decision to marry Shyam gave Jiji a new individuality. Now, she is a woman divided from and by her various selves – the present from the past, the woman from the child, the daughter from the father and mother. She entered into Shyam's family with dreams and hopes like any other Indian woman does. But her marriage was not what she thought.

Jiji's married life with Shyam begins on a dismal note and she finds herself ill at ease living in Shyam's house in a very disgusting ambience. Jiji's life entered into a very small as well as different world from that of her family. Paying rent to Shyam's father for the room they have accommodated in their own house astounded her.

Even though they lived in the same house, jiji had no relationship with Shyam's family, and it was a life of unhappiness. She became crestfallen in that house with unclean plates on the dining table, crowded noise from the family members, unclean toilet, which she had never used in her life. The situation made her to lead an uneasy and lonely life. Shyam insisted and tried to console her to stay with her parents because of his economic status. Being lonely in the house she regretted.

Loneliness and distress surrounded her which made her make calls to her parents. She does not want to show her depression and sorrows and her state of loneliness in Shyam's house to her parents as she had married Shyam against them. There is a self-image which makes her to cut the phone immediately hearing the voice of Baba or Mai. Her father understood Jiji more than her mother and had much concern for her.

Baba understood Jiji's sufferings and her terrible sense of being alone in Shyam's house. When she cut the phone call, Baba called her immediately as he knows well about his daughter. She felt lonely as if she was alienated from her own world of joy and happiness. As Jiji could not stay there without any happiness, she went to her parents. But Shyam never liked the thoughts of sending his wife to her parental home. Traditionally, patriarchal culture has defined wife as a person who never fails to be dependent, who desires to please her husband, ever to be proud of her husband, a sense of inadequate boundaries. Jiji became a dependent and lovable wife, who was always talking about Shyam and seeing the things from Shyam's views in her family.

Again life has gone out of Jiji's hands. Jiji's delivery for a male child led her to stay with her parents which became a fatal error in Jiji's life . Shyam was searching for another project, and so economically he could not rise up even to

look after the needs of his wife and son. Shyam's professional failures and Jiji's increasing demands fell heavy on him and led him to a state of depression.

In Indian society, man can do anything he wants but woman has to be a good wife for him and accept whatever he does. Jiji too, suffered like that. Soon the family was torn into pieces by an unexpected incident which led them into consternation. It is Malu's pregnancy that shattered everyone. Jiji realized that even love can be changed sometimes. She could not believe it is Shyam who made her pregnant. When Malu said he raped her, Jiji did not think that Malu was speaking the truth. She felt cheated and betrayed when she came to know of Shyam's infidelity. But she accepted everything with a deep silence. She could not express her disappointments to her parents or to anyone. She suffered silently.

The complexity of human characters sometimes could not be understood. Jiji now realizes how Shyam often entered into a different world in which she was never a part of nor did she understand his ways. She understands this only after his drowning in the sea. Jiji's short married life, received a severe jolt after Shyam's death which puts her on a knife's edge. Following Shyam, Malu died of illness, when her daughter Sachi was not even a ninety-days-old child. This made Jiji face a painful period of struggle and strain.

The Indian middle-class woman is engaged in an unconscious struggle to release herself from the problem or transcend it. Jiji raised a protest against social taboos and norms and tries to win them over. She decided to move to some other place with Anand and Sachi.

In her novels, Deshpande presents the active struggle of the women characters against patriarchy and male-chauvinism in their day-to-day existence, when they live alone without any male support. She has realized that being alone is not acceptable and it leads to insecurity in the society. Loneliness makes a man think of the future and also remember the past. In general, nostalgia would give either happiness or sadness. Especially sadness and stress in life leads to the depression of mind and soul. Jiji understands that the life is not stable and everyone has to meet the sufferings which could not be changeable. Estranged from family, living alone among strangers, she grapples with innumerable difficulties to support herself, and to survive with her babies. She even did not have time to worry about her life. As a dutiful woman she looks after the kids by her own income: "I had no time to brood or grieve. It was down to the basics; work, eat, sleep, wake up, go back to work..." (213).

Jiji's loneliness has taught her many things. Even though she meets struggles from the outsiders and there is an economical struggle with two children, she never turns to her parents. She refuses to go home even when Baba compels her not to be alone.

Jiji wants to lead a better life and she moves from one place to another

which is inconvenient for her children. She struggles to lead her life without any moral support, but she never knocks at others doors for help. Society's treatment and its views on widows torture her in many ways. She even struggles physically because of her woman hood.

Deshpande maintains her social responsibility as a writer by revealing some of the crude practices in the Indian society. She clearly depicts the unpleasant condition of women who live without a male's support through Jiji's character. The people especially men see them in a different way:

She [Deshpande] depicts the plight of an Indian lady becoming a widow at the early age of twenty-one. In her delineation of Manjari's character, she throws ample light on how the public eye ravenously ogles the features of widow (Mishra:56).

Experience with people makes her understand what life is. Left alone in the age of twenty one as a widow, she enters into a strange life which she herself cannot comprehend completely. Struggling becomes an integral part of a woman's life. Jiji for eighteen years spent the days with struggles and betrayals. She passes through a process of transformation which signifies for her a change from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion, and from weakness to strength.

Jiji realizes how men in the society behave towards a woman who lives alone. Whatever she does to hide her identity as a woman, is of no use. Men can smell it; they can smell the woman in whatever nature she is:

No matter how you dress, whether you shave your head or hide behind a burkha, they come at you, wanting your body, touching you, drolling over you sniffing at you like dogs. Like dogs in heat (284).

Men persevere to induce her to be a mistress and they even try to rape her in her own house. Jiji's sufferings are well expressed in her words to Raja. She tells Raja about -

the man, a friend's husband, who thought he could induce me to become his mistress. Yes, a friend's husband. 'She will never know', he said, as if that was all that mattered. I tell him about an employer, a man nearly Baba's age, who slobbered all over me and then fired me, saying I had a bad character. I tell him about the man who almost raped me in my own house, with my children sleeping inside. And he would have done it, yes, he would have if I hadn't fought back. (284).

Raja is portrayed as presenting the patriarchal conventions in the male dominated society. In their childhood days, he was the only boy in their three families of Baba, BK and RK. He was the caretaker of other children, including Jiji. Jiji realizes that Raja is still in that position to guard and guide her in all aspects. But she does not want to reveal the hazards she meets.

Raja, a widower, who wished to marry her in his young age, proposes to her, giving reason that it is for the welfare of their children Anand, Sachi and his son, Pavan. Raja also gives many reasons which are childish, like their marriage could ensure an economic stability, instead of maintaining two households, it would be cheaper to have one. He watches every action of Jiji, guides her all the time and it makes Jiji dependent on him. But Jiji has never wanted to depend on any one. She wishes to move out of the limited space of the patriarchal society and tries to choose a career of her own, other than that of an ordinary woman who maintains the house hold duties.

The dejections and disappointments of unrequited selfhood, the illusions and pinings of love and the yearnings of companionship make up the stream of Jiji's consciousness. Recalling the ions of her split self entangled in her memory, she creates a world of her own, a world where authentic selfhood flourishes.

Self-defencing plays a major role in Jiji's life. She does not allow any male to enter into her world and dominate her. Jiji is a typical feminine voice, who struggles through the gloom of her existence, not subduing but revolting, trying to sort out things for herself. In her, the readers can view the conscious-raising voice of the determined self affirming itself:

I want the brakes under my feet, not someone else's. I don't want a dual control, the control should be mine, mine alone (88).

Deciding not to reveal about the intruders in her house to Raja, she prepares to manage herself. She determines to have the control of her life only by her self and not by anyone. When Raja comes to know about the intruders, he is taken aback by her individualism.

Women have started to exert and come out of the mire of patriarchal oppression, to emerge as individuals and as human beings in their own society. Jiji, one such emergent woman, thinks that a woman must give expression to her inner self; at the same time, she does not deny the significance of social institutions of marriage and family. She respects the values of her parents, Shyam, her husband and more than all, her sister Malu. She wants herself to emerge as a living person who possesses her own personal traits. Jiji, does not want her own self to be autonomous but also others. Jiji understands from Baba's diary that it is not only she, but also Mai who wants to identify her as an individual self.

Baba was attracted by Mai and he fell in love with her and got married. Later, Baba came to know and accepted the fact that his wife was not so passionate like him in their marriage life. He understood that Mai, who wanted to be free, did not want to be dependent on anyone:

…what she valued most was freedom, freedom to be by herself, to be

on her own, freedom from our [Jiji's family] constant demands on her, from our claims, from the need to be 'aamchi Mai' (125).

Baba, the doctor of bones, and his wife inhabit two different worlds – the former's being the physical world whereas the latter's being the emotional and poignant and the huge chasm between the two could never be bridged. She wanted to be free from the familial bonds. Her independent self was shown through her writings.

Jiji finds from her mother's short stories that she totally hides herself and creates a passionate world for the readers. Her women characters in her short stories are totally contrary to that of her own self. They find happiness in surrendering themselves to their husbands and families. But Mai never wanted to surrender and hated to be questioned. Though,

an independent woman who hated being questioned, she wrote of women who found happiness in submission, not only to their husbands, but to their families as well…. there was a maverick self hidden behind that decorous woman so conscious of the proprieties, a self she was constantly battling against (125).

Freedom of the self from the conventions and traditional ties are the main theme of Deshpande. Her characters struggle throughout the story to attain wholeness, completeness and an authentic selfhood. They move from tradition to modern, despair to hope, from self-negation to self-assertion and selfhood. The protagonist Jiji and Mai are such characters in **Moving On** who struggle in the patriarchal, male dominated society and search for their self. In her newly awakened realization, Manjari underlines Deshpande's view that the woman should be herself, not owned or claimed by men. □

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Redefining Americanness: A study through Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

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In **Ceremony**, Silko portrays the endangered state of the Laguna reservation following World War II. The land has been damaged by run-off from the uranium mine on the nearby Cebolleta land grant and a generation of young Pueblo men has been destroyed by the war. These young men were originally enlisted in the army because they sought an escape from their feelings of inferiority and the poverty of reservation life, and because the army promised them the opportunity to see the world and to be accepted into mainstream America. The characters of Tayo, Rocky, and Emo, three typical young Pueblo, believe they have finally found access to the white world when the army recruiter tells them, "Anyone can fight for America, even you boys" (Silko 64).

Rather than giving the men a new life, World War II destroys them. Rocky is killed fighting the Japanese, Emo becomes an alcoholic, and Tayo returns with a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder that white medicine has been unable to cure. In his search for healing, Tayo first turns to drinking with Emo and the other Indian veterans. But becoming part of a pattern of drinking and violence never before witnessed among Indiana veterans only makes Tayo sicker. Rather than telling traditional stories about the people's relationship with the earth and the deities, the Indian veterans tell stories about the witchery of the modern world, which has tricked them into believing it is good, just as the Ck' o' yo magician tricked the Pueblos into believing his magic was enough to sustain life.

In Leslie Marmon Silko's novel, **Ceremony**, the main character Tayo must come to terms with himself and his surrounding environment upon his return from World War II. He is suffering from a kind of post traumatic stress disorder which has affected him physically as well as emotionally due to the fact that he has survived as a prisoner of war in Japan. Consequently he must deal with all of the horrific memories when he returns to live with his family on the Laguna Pueblo reservation in New Mexico. To intensify his problems, Tayo is half Caucasian and half Native American, so he must also deal with the added pressures of bi-culturalism. He is torn between the Native American world and the white world, and is unable to feel a secure security or belonging. Tayo's friends and family believe that they know the nature of and antidote for Tayo's

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illness and depression; however, it is only the Native American ceremonies which will truly help him. He needs to witness the convergence of life and truly understand the cyclical nature of his emotions and events that he has experienced. With the help and wisdom of Old Betonie, Tayo eventually finds peace in the Native American ceremonies even amongst all of the paradoxes present in America.

In her novel, **Ceremony**, Leslie Marmon Silko illustrates the many internal contradictions of American culture, values, and history. While Tayo grapples with his own internal struggles, the struggles of America are revealed through Silko's writing. America's perception of and relationship with Native Americans are detailed through Tayo's experiences of bi-culturalism. America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, blatantly discriminates and devalues its true native citizens, Furthermore, America's ideal of bravery is tested. Not only are Native American soldiers dying for the country that seized their land, but one is led to rethink the traditional American ideal of bravery. The paradoxical nature of the American tradition of recording history is also evident within **Ceremony** as Silko introduces the Native American values attached to the importance of oral tradition. While history sustains Native American culture, Americans often either discredit or manipulate history to justify its actions.

Perhaps, one of the most ironic themes in **Ceremony** is that of the United States' relationship with the Native Americans. The history of Native Americans and their struggles with the American government have been incredibly bleak. American settlers attempted to destroy the Native American people and use the land for their own purposes. Furthermore, the American government subjugated the Native Americans by forcing them onto Indian reservations, "They see no life when they look they see only objects. The world is a dead thing for them" (Silko 135). The American government did not see the land in the same manner as the Native Americans and the government possessed the power to use the land for their own means.

Furthermore, the relationship becomes even more paradoxical during times of crisis. Native Americans become first class citizens when they are needed. Native Americans were drafted to fight for the country that stole their land, yet they were expected to be patriotic, loyal, and willing to die for America, "They were America the Beautiful too, this was the land of the free just like the teachers said in school. They had the uniform and they didn't look different no more. They got respect" (Silko 42). The Native Americans were respected when they were required to maintain national security and when they conformed to American standards. Such discrimination may lead one to

doubt just how fair and just the "land of the free" is in terms of their treatment of Native Americans. Discrimination of the rightful inhabitants of this nation is quite paradoxical indeed, "…an old white woman rolled down her window and said [to Rocky and Tayo] 'God bless you, God bless you, but it was the uniform, not them she blessed" (Silko 41).

Another very telling aspect of America's paradoxical perception of the Native American culture is that the Americans exploited Native Americans for their commercial value, such as in the Super Chief railroad lines and the Santa Fe calendars. Such commercialization was both popular and prevalent, " Josiah used to bring the calendars home every year from the Santa Fe depot, on the reservation these calendars were more common than Coca Cola calendars" (Silko 121). Furthermore, the Native Americans were also commercialized for their culture and customs. , "The Gallup ceremonial had been an annual event for a long time. It was good for the tourist business coming through in the summertime on Highway 66" (Silko 116). Silko utilizes the cattle metaphor to illustrate how Americans view the Native Americans as marginalized, "Tayo thought about animals then, horses and mules, and the way they drifted with the wind" (Silko 27). In that respect, the Native Americans drift around the country with no land of their own. Americans assigned very little value to the Native Americans, which is illustrated in how easy it was for the Americans to commercialize the Native Americans and their culture. Thus, America only seems to utilize the talents of her native people when a dangerous situation arises, and Native Americans must risk their lives for a country that has treated them as second class citizens. Another American paradox that Silko comments upon is the attempt to find peace through violent means. As Americans, they have violently intervened in global affairs attempting to restore global harmony:

> *"The destroyers had tricked the white people as completely as they had fooled the Indians, and now only a few people understood how the filthy deception worked; only a few knew that the lie was destroying the white people faster than it was destroying the Indian people"* (Silko 204).

Silko raises the issue of how the violence of war is also very detrimental to those who experience it. Tayo experiences a post traumatic stress disorder which alters him physically and emotionally, much like those who survived horrors such as Auschwitz, "They called it battle fatigue, and they said hallucinations were common with malarial fever" (Silko 8). Tayo was made both physically and emotionally ill because of his war experiences. Taking the theme of peace through destruction further, Silko writes of the creation of the

first atomic bomb at Trinity site in New Sands, “And the top-secret laboratories where the bomb had been created were deep in the Jemez. Mountains, on the land the government took form Cochiti Pueblo: Los Alamos, only a hundred miles northeast of him [Tayo] now…” (Silko 246). Therefore, the American government perpetuated peace through violence by constructing the atomic bomb on the very land that it took away from their native people. While the American ideal of bravery is clearly defined through masculinity and military means, Tayo discovers that there is a new sense of bravery which can be found within him. **Ceremony** is about convergence and Tayo must find the courage to discover and embrace that convergence. Tayo challenges the American ideal of bravery to include an emotional awakening, “He cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together-the old stories, the war stories, their stories-to become the story that was still being told” (Silko246). With the aid of Old Betonie, Tayo struggles to gather the strength necessary to face his own personal demons. Old Betonie teaches Tayo that peace and courage are not found immediately, but rather it is a gradual process that must be found from within, “‘Take it easy’, he said, ‘don’t try to see everything all at once’” (Silko120). Thus, Tayo transcends the American ideal to add an emotional and mental strength to the concept of bravery.

Silko presents oral history and tradition as an integral part of the Native American culture. Often this history and wisdom are presented through story-telling, “What she said”: The only cure I know is a good ceremony, that’s what she said” (Silko3). The importance and ritual of understanding ceremonies is passed through the history of Native Americans. Passing on wisdom from one generation to the next illustrates how Native American history is very cyclical, as Old Grandma shows by stating, “ It seems like I already heard these stories before…only thing is, the names sound different” (Silko260).

In contrast, American history is linear and not as rich in wisdom as the Native American culture. At times, America’s history is tainted. American history may also be manipulated to justify questionable American actions, such as the intervention in global affairs. American legacies are passed down, but as Americans they concentrate on the best and tend to hide those shameful events. In America, Native American history is not valued as much as other “American’ history. However, Native American history contains so much wisdom and life lessons than the American history found in school books. American history can be readily found in classrooms across the country, but Native Americans must work hard to preserve their rich cultural tradition. It is paradoxical that the Native Americans must persevere to preserve their history which is full of culture

and wisdom while edited American history is available for all to accept and embrace. In **Ceremony**, Leslie Marmon Silko reveals the paradoxes present in America today. Be it the government's policies regarding Native Americans, the American ideal of bravery, or the history that school children read in their classrooms, America is full of ironies and paradoxes. These paradoxes do not in any way reduce the grandness of America as a nation, but rather serve to remind its citizens that they do not always remember those who helped them become what they are today. Silko's novel is a literary reminder for Americans to acknowledge their first true national heritage and remember that the Native American heritage is still alive. Silko has proved that America has made mistakes in the past, but certainly has the power to rectify those mistakes today, Although the Pueblo Indians managed to survive the repeated attempts of early white conquerors to destroy their ceremonial lifestyle, in the twentieth century they have faced circumstances that threaten their culture as never before. While the Pueblos cannot ignore the impact that white contact has had upon their culture, neither can they completely abandon their old rituals and still survive ethnically. The key to survival, as Silko demonstrates in **Ceremony**, is found in allowing native Pueblo ceremonies to change to meet the present-day realities of reservation life. It is in this fusion of old and new that the Pueblos can find the healing they so badly need after suffering more than four hundred years of white conquest. As Frank Waters so vevidly expresses, "For here as nowhere else has the conflict been fought so bitterly, and have the opposing principles approached so closely a fusion. At that fusion there will arise the new faith for which we are crying so desperately"(425-26). □

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Linda Hogan's Solar Storms: An Ecofeminist and Native American Perspective

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Different critics have defined ecofeminism variously depending on their perceptions particularly on the issues related to the phenomenon of feminism and environmental crisis. However, there is no difference of opinion over the fact that the oppression of women and degradation of nature are fundamentally connected and that the environmental efforts are therefore integral with work to overcome the oppression of women.

Ynestra King defines ecofeminism as "a critical social movement, representing the convergence of two of the most important contemporary movements, feminism and ecology". (King 720). In this definition, King emphasizes that the main goals of ecofeminism, "human liberation and the liberation of nature are inextricably connected, as are the ecological and the social crisis" (King 730). While ecocriticism primarily deals with literature and nature, ecofeminism focuses on the double domination of woman and nature in a patriarchal society. In this regard, Terry Gifford explains.

> *"Ecofeminist criticism has drawn attention to the gendered nature of the history of our species' 'conquest', control and exploitation of the environment by pointing out that it is the same mind-set that dominated both the environment and women"* (Gifford 15).

Ecofeminism is a fusion of the two social movements i.e. environmentalism and feminism. It is a philosophy born from the union of feminist and ecological thinking, and the belief that the social mentality that leads to the domination and oppression of women is directly connected to the social mentality that leads to the abuse of the environment. Feminist environmentalism strives to reconstruct and redefine the identity of a nurturing mother which implies the mechanism of dominance in terms of the patriarchal hegemony.

The French feminist Francoise d'Euabonne is regarded as having first used the term *ecofeminisme* in 1974 in her work **Le feminisime ou la mort** (1974) in which she argues that "patriarchal man" is responsible for overpopulation and environmental destruction, and that feminism is the only way to overcome these dual threats. She called upon women to lead an ecological

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revolution to save the planet.

Like feminism itself, ecofeminism is a diverse ideology containing contradictory viewpoints. However, the common thread that unifies these viewpoints is the idea that there are connections between the domination of nature and the domination of women in contemporary society. Ecofeminists believe that an exploration and understanding of these connections is necessary to end various forms of oppression.

Linda Hogan, born in Denver, Colorado, on July 1947, a Chickasaw poet, novelist, essayist, playwright, and activist, is widely considered to be one of the most influential and provocative Native American figures in the contemporary American literary landscape. Not only is Hogan a prolific writer, but through her works, she has distinguished herself as a political ideologist and an environmental/philosophical theorist. Her characteristically holistic representation of the human experience is important in that it centers on the concept that all life is interconnected; only by acknowledging and appreciating the relation of human life to other life forms.

Hogan's fictions reveal that the issues and experiences related to marginalization and exclusion have deeply affected her writing. Hogan suggests that she was profoundly affected by her Native and working class experiences while she was growing up, and that those experiences have impacted the works that she has written. She offers her own words as a way of sharing her experiences as a marginalized Indian woman:

> *"I, am Indian woman, from a non-middle class background, on the margin [italics mine], not a member of the dominant culture-I need to speak for what my struggle has been, and offer the strength of that survival to keep us all moving together, to offer back my own words [italics mine]. This means to speak about what it's like to be of mixed blood, to have suffered losses, to have not been educated, to have worked primarily at working-class jobs until fairly recently and to have worked as a writer".* (Balassi 154)

It is apparent that Hogan's life is reflected in her novels. The principal characters of her novels are people of limited means, often struggling to survive. They are brought back to hard times due to government deception and White people. The characters in the novels are removed from the mainstream of modern life. Her protagonists struggle to find their own place in the world because they are not a part of this traditional life. The close reading of the novels reveal the marginality of the character at different levels including marginality experienced by the characters in relationship to their own tribal backgrounds, their marginalization in relationship to the European-American world of the developing industry and their experiences of marginalization from their natural

environment, the landscape of Oklahoma. However, Hogan is hopeful for their future. Through her characters Hogan offers her thoughts on the future of Native American and the possibilities for them in today's world.

In her works of fiction, Hogan examines the broken bonds between humans and nature and reveals the ways in which the dominant Western patriarchal ideologies and a history of violent colonialism exploits and harms both women and the environment, and the ways in which women's bodies and the land are inscribed with this history. Her fictions challenge dominant western ideologies concerning gender and the relationship between humans and between humans and nature. Her work effectively undermine dominant Western cultural narratives and binary oppositions like nature and culture, male and female, spirit and matter, and mind and body and convinces the place of humans in relation to non human nature. Furthermore, Hogan asserts women's relationship to nature and presents the bond between women and nature as a medium for social, political and environmental change.

Hogan, through her literary work, presents the worldviews which are in alignment with and even extension of Native American worldviews especially in terms of humankind's place within nature. These worldviews are also consistent with current ecofeminist philosophies. Furthermore, viewing fictional work by Hogan through ecofeminist lens, we can better understand a new vision of humankind's place within the cosmos. Beside, we can develop ways of thinking about humans and nature that challenge Western patriarchal, dualistic and destructive systems of thought. Finally, using ecofeminist thought to understand and interpret Hogan's work of fiction can help us to reinvent relationships between humans and humans, and between humans and more than human nature.

However, apart form being a feminist, she is a staunch environmentalist and an activist striving all though her career for the understanding of the responsibilities of humankind towards the harsh realities of its existence. She strongly believes in such an existence which is necessarily interconnected and interdependent and which is beyond the boundaries so far realized by anthropocentric ideologies reflected in science, religion, art, literature and philosophy. Hence, a study on Hogan's fiction from the ecofeminist point of view could be treated as a modest contribution in the field and the discipline of ecocritical and environmental scholarship.

The present paper attempts to study Linda Hogan's novel ***Solar Storms*** from an ecofeminist perspective. It attempts to reveal how Hogan sees the landscape as having its vital connection to the human beings inhabiting it. It is interesting to see how throughout the novel, Hogan maintains that the

interaction between human and nonhuman nature, as well as the disruption due to that, has an undeniable influence on person's sense of self. It is also remarkable to see how Hogan juxtaposes the healing powers of the landscape with the protagonist's fighting for a restorative healing of the landscape. The characters through their activism for the preservation of the tribal lands reach a sense of completion of their identity crisis.

The characters in **Solar Storms** engage themselves in identity formations that entail negotiations between their native heritages and the impact of the dominant society. They struggle for their survival. Moreover, they are painfully aware of the interconnectedness between the domination of their Native American tribal culture and the exploitation of the nonhuman biosphere. The novel exemplifies such interconnectedness in its depiction of the young mixed-blood woman, Angel Jensen, who goes back to her reservation with the intention to reconnect with her tribal lands, her female ancestors, and most particularly with her mother who gave her up for adoption.

Solar Storms is the portrayal of the dislocation of Native American protagonist in relation to the destruction of tribal lands. The protagonist, Angel's journey towards homeland makes her realize that the destruction of her tribal lands, the broken bonds among her family members, and her separation from her mother are results of an imbalance between human and nonhuman nature, an imbalance caused by the interference of the white Euro-American settlers with her tribe's culture. Her fight for the legal rights of her tribe and the conservation of the tribal lands are acts of responsibility based on her understanding of the organic interconnectedness within the biosphere.

Hogan's novels are widely known as historical novels that focus on the historical wrongs done to both Native Americans and the American landscape during the colonization of North America. Her novels portray actual historical events and offer the reader insight into the consequences of those events on individual communities. In doing so, she is acting on her belief that she has "to do something stronger than history to reach the emotions of the readers" (Hogan "interview" 116). In order to tell stories, she begins with the history and adorns "it to create and put the imagery to work" (Ibid. 117). For this Hogan uses rhetorical techniques such as anthropomorphism of the landscape and the natural world, a shifting of reality and a story line that juxtaposes changes in landscape with changes in members of her fictional community. These techniques serve to make visible the interrelationship of humanity and the natural world.

In **Solar Storms**, Linda Hogan speaks about the impact of "construction of the James Bay-Great Whale hydroelectric project in Quebec" (Cook 43)

on the indigenous people. It is set on the landscape of the Boundary Waters between Canada and Minnesota, a pristine landscape of countless islands, wild animals and desperately harsh winters. The story is set within a Native community threatened with destruction by the kind of economic development that marginalizes and exploits the North Country to benefit other communities in the south. It is told from the point of view of one of the central characters Angela Jensen.

When Angel arrives at Adam's Rib at the age of seventeen she is physically scarred and emotionally broken. She comes in quest of her people, her history and her mother. She expresses herself as "a rootless teenager" (25) and "the girl who never cried" (26). She has no family and no home. She comes carrying her plastic bags of clothes, the fifty one dollar bills that her blood grandmother Agnes Iron sent her, her fake baby photo, what she calls her two "rooms" of anger and fear, and a history of violence that marks her skin (25-25). She arrives to Adam's Rib with the purpose of reconstructing her past and retrieving some part of herself. In the beginning of her journey Angel lives a two dimensional life that is dominated by her anger and her fear. In this context, Ellen L Arnold suggests in "Beginnings Are Everything: The Quest for Origins in Linda Hogan's Solar Storms", Angel lives on the surface (287). When she breaks the mirror at the house of Agnes Iron and Agne's mother Dora Rouge, this symbolizes her willingness to go beyond the surface, as Arnold suggests (289), and it also symbolizes her own internal brokenness and her willingness to confront that brokenness.

As Angel first enters the town of Adam's Rib, her own pain and emptiness are reflected back to her in the isolation and emptiness of the town, it's history, the land, and the displacement of the women there. Besides, the legend of the Abandoned Ones establishes a direct correlation between the degradation of women and the degradation of the land and animals. Angel evokes:

> *The First Women at Adam's Rib had called themselves the Abandoned Ones… The first generation of the Abandoned Ones traveled down with French fur trappers who were seeking their fortunes from the land. When the land was worn out, the beaver and wolf gone, mostly dead, the men moved on to what hadn't yet been destroyed, leaving their women and children behind, as they too were used-up animals* (28).

This brief story within the story, including the capitalization of "The First Women" and the "Abandoned Ones", makes it seem as if it is a legendary story of systematic abuse of women and nature that has happened since time immemorial.

The story of abuse is further reflected in Angel's history ad the story

of her mother, Hannah Wing, and her blood grandmother, Loretta Wing. Yet, within this story we also see the first glimmers of the possibility of healing. The women build a community and take over the roles the men have abandoned:

> *"The women eked out their livings in whatever ways they could, fishing or sewing. They brought in their own wood, and with their homely work-worn hands they patched their own houses…"* (28)

Angel also must learn these skills of survival and how to create a community for herself and to open herself up to the world in order to fill the emptiness within her due to her own abandonment and history.

When she returns at Adam's Rib, her Native American homeland, to live with her great grandmother Agnes and great-great grandmother Dora-Rouge, she gets united and learns about her mysterious past. She gets a sense of the origin of the scars that disfigure her face. Bush, Angel's step-grandmother, resides in nearby Fur Island, where Angel also spends some time. Among her foremothers, Angel reconciles her modern world with her traditional one of song, story, and ceremony. The physical journey to her ancestors' native land is especially important for Angel. It parallels her emotional journey toward self-awareness and self-reliance. Her quest for identity broadens her perspectives leading to commitments that reveal her inner strength. She realizes that her individual identity finds its best expression in terms of her relationships within a community that encompasses other people, land and water and, all life. Through the development of Angel's perspective, and the ideas and actions of the women who become her mentors, the novelist Linda Hogan puts forth a superbly powerful vision of the relationships among humans and the natural world that sustain life.

Bush, Angel's step-grandmother, represents Angel's teacher, mother-figure and goddess. Through Bush's examples and piecing together of her story and ultimately through her journey into the boundary waters, Angel begins to allow the boundaries to shape, her vision to shift, and herself to merge with a multidimensional world of creation. Roseanne Hoefel, in "Narrative Choreography toward a New Cosmology: The Medicine Way in Linda Hogan's **Solar Storms"**, Bush becomes Angel's teacher and introduces her to "the older world" of knowledge (38). When Angel first meets Bush "she seemed rooted where she stood, at the boundary between land and water" (67) and "stood barefoot in that dark, newly exposed clay, as if she'd just been created by one of the gods who made us out of earth, as if she'd risen up like first woman, still and awed by creation" (67).

Bush embodies the land and a way of knowledge that is felt and known in the body rather than arrived at through linear logic. Angel will eventually

come to share and to understand this alternative embodied epistemology after hard work, long silences, and immersion in and merging with the natural world. Bush comes to represent to Angel a sort of goddess and mother figure, but Bush also has her flaws and her hidden scar. She feels deeply the loss of both Hannah and Angel and is in many ways alienated from the community of Adam's Rib. The journey into the boundary waters transforms and heals her just as it awakens Angel into full consciousness of her place in the cosmos.

Through her grandmother's story telling, Angel comes to understand that ancestral knowledge and a connection to the land that reside in her body at a deep cellular level. She also comes to understand how the scars of her body and soul were passed down from the bodies of her marked mother and grandmother. Historically, women had been violated by men and share a brutal history that parallels and is intricately linked with the degradation of nature. Just as the marks of violence were written in scars on the bodies of herself, her mother, and her grandmother, the land too is etched with scars of poison, erosion, and the disappearance of animals and trees as well as the errant rivers that destroy the land and communities when the dams are built. As Angel discovers through her family's elemental way of life, her own blood ties to the land, the threat or a huge hydroelectric dam project ruins her idyll, the four women including Angel. Agnes, Dora-rouge and Bush undertake a dangerous journey far northward to visit the homeland, where Hannah Wing is known to live.

Violence plays remarkable role in the noel. We witness both the traditional ways in which Angela's forefathers attempt to battle it as well as the contemporary struggle of Angela's relatives to keep their land and water rights. Bush, Angela's step-grandmother, educates readers about Native traditions when she attempts to shield Angela from her mother's abuse. Convinced that Hannah Wing, Angela's mother, is a troubled woman with many demons, and fearful that Angela is vulnerable and unsafe in her custody, Bush prepares a mourning feast to protect Angela from Hannah's torment. But Bush's traditional methods do not spare Angela from her childhood with Hannah. Half of Angela's face is bitten off by her mother- a wound that take on multiple meanings as Angela finds out more about the circumstances that led to such violence. Bush attempts to neutralize the power of evil that Hannah asserts against Angel. Hannah continues to enact violence on Angel, suggesting that evil prevails. Angel is empowered by the trip north with her grandmothers; she begins to heal in the company of her elders.

In fact, nonviolence is so important to the novel that Hogan insists the indigenous people who fight for their land and water rights do so through non-

violent means. While the storyline about the hydroelectric project has potential for violence, the Fat Eaters resist such extremes. In this context, Barbara J. Cook explains:

> *Although Hogan acknowledges the possibility of violence by the tribe, she depicts a community that returns to wholeness through its nonviolent fight in a struggle that enables its members to respect themselves again. In the process they recover the spirituality of their ancestors as they remember the old stories and songs. Angel (a), who during the novel heals from the psychic and physical scars inflicted by her mother, is an individual representative of the healing of the tribal community as it attempts to heal from the scars inflicted by the developers on the land and the river. Angel (a)'s healing is brought about through the strength of the community and the spiritual link to ancestors, stories, animals, and healing plants.* (Cook 49)

Evidently, Angela's determination and the victory of the Natives over the white land developers suggest the simultaneous recovery of the personal, tribal, and the historical. The process of healing, which is a communal rather than an individual process, works for Angela, her people, and the natural world in which the Fat Eaters live and on which they depend for livelihood and subsistence.

In this creation of society that confronts multiple oppressions and its belief that only an interconnected world can offer a solution to the human depression, Hogan's personal philosophy connects with the heuristics of organicism contemporary ecofeminist critics envision.

> *It is to pray as well as to fight for the animals, the waters, against all wars, violence, and division. It is to learn clarity and to act out of kindness and compassion. It is to not be involved in conflict except when necessary to grant human and civil rights, animal rights, or to protect the earth from intrusion, poison, or other destruction. It is to pray and offer our breath and songs back to the world* (Swann et al 247).

The journey of four women in **Solar Storms** makes the women to cultivate the leadership, strength, and confidence necessary to integrate into the community of Fat Eaters, as not only equals but as competent and dedicated leaders. This experience also allows the women to transform themselves and their people back into the Beautiful People. Through their experiences in nature, the women gain not only confidence and leadership abilities, but a sense of obligation and duty toward the natural world and their own culture. They see

their resistance against the Hydro-Quebec Dam Projects as part of their pact with the animals, plants, and the rest of the natural world. As Tarter clarified:

> "for Angel [and the other women] it was not just an abstract *issue they were protesting; the destruction of the land and animals is the destruction of the culture if the Cree and Inuit people…[T]hey do not live by standard dualism"* (Tarter 142)

The novel demonstrates that Angel's healing and the healing of the other women is personal, spiritual, and political. In this regard, Tarter says,

> *--"[the healing and development] is only possible as part of a community, and that community includes real, material land and all its creatures"* (Ibid. 142).

Thus the women are integrated into the community as equals with the men in their community as well as with the non-human members of their community.

Hogan's novel deals with not only Angel's re-initiation into her tribal heritage, its 1970s setting also acknowledges political contemporary issues such as the U.S. war in Vietnam, the American Indian Movement at Wounded Knee, and coincides with several movements that shaped the United States considerably, such as the feminist movement and the ecological movement.

The entire novel emphasizes the healing power that comes from a reconnection of humans to their environmental landscape. **Solar Storm** implies the reconciliation between woman and her tribal lands not only the individual person's reinitiating into organic world but also the possibility for consequential change for the entire human race. □

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SURVIVAL AND REGENERATION : A study of Margaret Atwood's THE EDIBLE WOMAN and SURFACING

* T.T. Lasitha

Feminism is an expression of resentment at the unjust treatment meted out to women. Feminism as a social movement largely focuses on limiting or eradicating gender inequality and promoting women's rights, interests and issues in society. It is a struggle against the hardships, neglect and dual moral standards to which women are subjected. Feminism challenges the male – oriented nature of society and the long accepted stereotypes and gender-roles thrust upon wamen and also asserts the right of women to know about herself not as a shadow of man but as an autonomous and authentic individual. The new woman was keen to broaden her experience without submitting to male domination.

The new woman's demand for her rightful place, recognition and respect due her is prompted by an inner urge to make her existence a meaningful one. Feminism or Feminist examines the experiences of women from all culture, races and classes. The theme of survival has become one of the prime features of women in literature under the sway of feminism.

Canadian literature emphasizes on the personal and universal aspects and skips the national and the cultural. Canadian literature has been neglected to a large extent in the home territory among other things and there is a fear on the part of Canadians of knowing who they are. Canadian literature ought to be comparative, as should the study of any literature be, as it is by contrast the distinctive pattern shows up most strongly.

The Canadian writers who came to prominence in the 1960's and 1970's though as varied as there immediate predecessors, are linked by common energy, confidence and sophistication. Most contemporary Canadian writers have found an abundance of promising material to be presented within technically complex but none the less traditional. One of the most noticeable features of Canadian fiction has been the number of accomplished women writers who have achieved distinction since the 1950's.

Margaret Lawrence, Mary Dalton, Margaret Avison, Margaret Atwood etc. of these most Canadian authors Margaret Atwood has been one of the dominating personalities of contemporary Canadian literature. She is a prolific writer, poet novelist, literary critic, feminist and political activist of Canada and has also received recognition nationally as well as internationally for her writ-

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ings. As a writer in her mid-career, she has become in her own words 'a sort of eminent fixture' not only in Canada but also internationally . She is an extremely versatile writer and takes up the convention of a different narrative form. She is considered as a national literary celebrity whose works has been translated into more than twenty languages and published in twenty-five countries.

This paper focuses on the theme of survival and regeneration of the female protagonists in Margaret Atwood's **The Edible Woman** and **Surfacing**. Atwood was considered as the most distinguished novelist who has focused on women protagonist in her writings. **The Edible Woman** is her first novel and has been welcomed as the best novel of 1969. Her second novel is **Surfacing** (1972).

Her first novel **The Edible Woman** (1969) is about the identity crisis of a woman who is provoked by pressure against which she seriously finds herself at odds. The novel explores two theme namely victimization and survival that largely describe female experience. The young protagonist rebels against her feminine destiny and the novel goes beyond women's anger and bewilderment in its exploitation of the power of laughter to reveal the absurdities within social conventions. Marian McAlpin, seems at first to be a perfectly conventional young woman, with friends, a successful and attractive man in her life, and a reasonably good job working for a market research company. She begins to identify herself with food and hence starts rejecting one after the other. She feels that everything in her life seems to fly out of control with her engagement, just as Marian seems ready to fulfill "every woman's" dream of trading in her troublesome job for marriage and a new life at home with children. Marian rebels against social conformity as she becomes very much disillusioned with her job. Symbolic of herself she makes a cake and offers it to two men in her life. Her fiancé (Peter) refuses it whereas Duncan her guide and mentor helps her eat it up.

> *"It gave me a peculiar sense of satisfaction to see him eat as if the work hadn't been wasted after all – although the cake was absorbed without exclamations of pleasure, even without noticeable expression. I smiled comfortably at him."* (TEW :363)

Eating of the cake is an act of celebration which marks the decisive moment of Marian's life (I.e.) freeing herself from the tangles at least symbolically. At one stage she begins to reason out all by herself as to why she ought to be a submissive wife. Towards the end she is able to renounce both Peter as well as Duncan and is able to stand out as a new individual who is able to overcome matrimony, domesticity and conducting lives within the confines. Her self emancipation is not merely an illustration of her victory but a success against a social order.

Marian becomes a consumer as it is difficult if not impossible to reconstruct one's identity outside the symbolic and social order and the individual survival is likely to mean compromises with the society. The heroine of the novel conforms to the social norms though she finds them degrading and her complicity and tacit approval of her own subjugation cannot be just denied. At times she is very much irritated of the roles that she plays in the society. Atwood stamps her Canadian identity on her heroines. She is very much aware of Canada's powerlessness and compares this to her female characters who are also powerless. The heroine of **The Edible Woman** and the woman protagonist of Atwood's second novel **Surfacing** are similar as both of them are 'new women' in search of identity and freedom.

In **Surfacing** it is the nameless protagonist who goes back to her place of childhood in the Quebec bush searching for her lost father, who has already been drowned in the lake. The search in the novel, becomes a search through immediate relationship, through her own past and growing up, her family and finally the focus of the hunt revolves around her missing father. She dives into the water and discerns an entangled figure whom she feels is her buried memories and then she finds a way to heal the split within her own psyche, by restoring to her emotional and spiritual health.

> *"I stand there shivering, seeing my reflection and my feet down through it, white as fishflesh on the sand, till finally being in the air is more painful than being in the water and I bend and push myself reluctantly into the lake".*(Sur.80)

The literal surfacing of the protagonist from the waters of the lake in which her father had drowned represents her rising from death (the past) to life. The story brings out many layered process of rehabilitation through which the protagonist manages to come to term with her past as she recognizes that the past cannot be retrieved though it may be partially constructed. Through memory and fantasy and towards the end her relation to the world changes and hence she readily leaves the wilderness and return to the society with the hope of survival and regeneration. *"The lake is quiet, the trees surround me, asking and giving nothing".*(Sur.208)

In **Surfacing** she shifts from a position of alienation and victim hood to a new sense of the vital relationship between herself as human and the land which she inhabits, though it also signals a further stage which she has to face in coming to terms with the human beings in the modern world. She has escaped her former sense of total closure, thus achieving a liberated self.

In **The Edible Women** Marian who was provoked by identity crisis and pressures subverts all social definitions from within through resistance and survival and finally wins over social her past and her acceptance and

acknowledgement of it as present is vital in her process of regeneration.

Atwood's novels are characterized by their refusal to invoke any final authority as their open endings resist conclusiveness, offering instead hesitation, absence or silence while hovering on the verge of new possibilities. Even national boundaries begin to blur as Atwood responds to her widening international readership, arguing for a shared recognition of complicity in a globalized scenario which threatens human survival. The female protagonists are thus driven to rebellion against what seems to be their fate in the modern technological "Americanized World" and to psychic break down and break through.

In both these novels the protagonists have accomplished in finding new subject positions for themselves more in harmony with the world they live in. The author defies the patriarchal attempt to annihilate the selfhood of women, the gradual carrying of female space by women through various strategies and woman's quest for self-definition or regeneration and autonomy.

These protagonists of Atwood are portrayed as powerful characters who inspite of severe hurdles exhibit great mental strength, determination and free themselves in order to establish an identity for themselves. She asserts that woman can overcome their oppressions by liberating themselves. The theme of survival and regeneration is reinforced and these women protagonists fight against odds and survive, challenging the fight against patriarchal society. □

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Hāsya Rasa In Some Canonical English Poems

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The second important universal, absolute, complete form of realizable situation or experience listed by Bharatamuni is Hâsya. It is generated, created or produced when action, costume and speech or language for that matter bringforth some unusual, strange or incongruent relation. Hāsya is different from what we know as joy, generated when lost friends meet or something pleasing or wonderful is achieved. This joy, can be found in Rasas like Sṛńgāra, Vira or Adbhuta.

Bharatamuni while describing Hāsya Rasa says:

``efkeke=Àle HejJes<eeue[keÀejOeeä³e& ueewu³ekegÀnkeÀe melHe^ueeHeJ³e[die oMe&veoes<eesoenjCeeefoefYeefJe>YeeJew$eÝlHeOeles`` 1

[Nāžya āstra of Bharatmuni]

Thus Hāsya Rasa arises from Vibhāvas such as wearing clothes and orṇaments that belong to someone else or do not fit (vikrta), Shamelessness (dhrsžya), greed, tickling sensitive parts of the body, telling faṇtastic tạles, seeing some (comic) deformity (vyaṅga) and describing faults (dosodāharana). The further discussion of Hāsya Rasa enumerated in details in Bhāratiyanāžya ātra, Sāhityadarpaṇa of Vi vanāth Kavirāja, Vāgbha?ālamkāra of Vāgbhaža, Da arūpa of Dhanamjaya and the like is really very remarkable in as much as it covers every possible situation or condition in Hāsya and is as various as Smita (gentle smile), Hasita (smile), Vhasita (laughter), Upahasita (laughter with ridicule), Apahasita (uproarious laughter) and Atihasita (convulsive laughter). While elaborating on these Dhanamjaya in Da arūpa observes:

efmceleefcen efJekeÀeefmeve³eveced, efkeÀáeuue]#³eefÜpeb m³eeled ceOegjmJejb efJenefmeleced meefMejëkeÀcHeefYeocegH-enefmeleced ûû 76 ûû DeHenefmeleb meeM$eced, efJeef#emee² YeJel³eeflenefmeleced

Üs Üs nefmeles ®ew<eeb p³eÿs ceO³esçOeces keÀ^ceMeë ûû 77 ûû ²

[The Da arūpaka, p. 363]

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Thus a Gentle smile (smita) is opening the eyes wide; a smile (hasita) is showing the teeth to some extent; laughing (Vihasita) is making a soft sound; Laughter (upahasita) is the same, accompanied by shaking of the head; uproarious laughter (apahasita) is (laughter) accompanied by tears; and convulsive laughter (atihasta) is (laughter) with shaking of the body. Two of these varieties of laughter (are characteristic) of the higher (noble born) two of the midding (ordinary) and two of the lower (characters), in the order named. This division of laughter in terms of dignity of the individuals can be roughly equated to what in the west is known as 'high' and 'low' or farcical comedies. Sometimes the laughter is witty and gentle and gives rise to humour (a smile). At other times it is boisterous, more physical (funny action) and gives rise to violent laughter (in the text as well as in the reader). [3]

[The Da arūpa, pp.143-144]

The categorization of the causes of laughter is very interesting: the Vibhāvas or the causes and anubhāvas or the effects can be located or discovered in the same person and that where there is a subject (in the text) and an object of laughter – one's funny act causes the other to laugh. Bharatamuni in Nāžya āstra says that:

> When one laughs on one's own, that laughter is said to be existing in oneself. When one causes another person to laugh, the laughter is said to be existing in another person.[4]
>
> [Aesthetic Rapture, Vol I. P. 50]

In the following poem by Chinese poet Han-Shan, one finds the first kind of laughter – at oneself:

In the house east of here lives an old woman.
Three or four years ago, she got rich.
In the old days she was poorer than I;
now she always laughs at me for not having a penny.
She laughs at me for being behind;
I laugh at her for getting ahead.
We laugh as though we'd never stop,
She from the east and I from the west[5]

[Cold Mountain, P. 20.]

Overlooking the cruelty of fate Han – Shan manages to look at the funy side of the things, he is able to see the poverty of the old woman's mind and finds this funny. An important fact brought forth by the above situation is that laughing at oneself requires a trivialization of the difficulties or oddities of life

and presupposition that one is funny or amusing.

The other kind of laughter, at another, also involves trivializing the subject. If evil is taken too seriously, outcome will obviously be Bhayānaka or Bībhatsa. Hence, in a satire, there is a trivialization of all things. When the satire is on the entire mankind or class, it also involves the reader as well as the narrative voice, and hence here we find the possibility of laughter. For instance let's take the following lines from 'The Rape of the lock' by Alaxendar Pope where Ariel's conjectures regarding the disaster that threatens Belinda, (the herden) are stated in some of the most amusing lines in the poem:

Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour, or her new brocade;
Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at aball;
Or whether Heaven has doom'd that shock must fall. [6]

[The Rape of the lock, lines 253 - 258]

Laughter in the above given condition has become a possibility only because the moral bankruptcy of the ladies is trivialized and made to seem less serious by the ridiculous contrasts of the above given paired calamities.

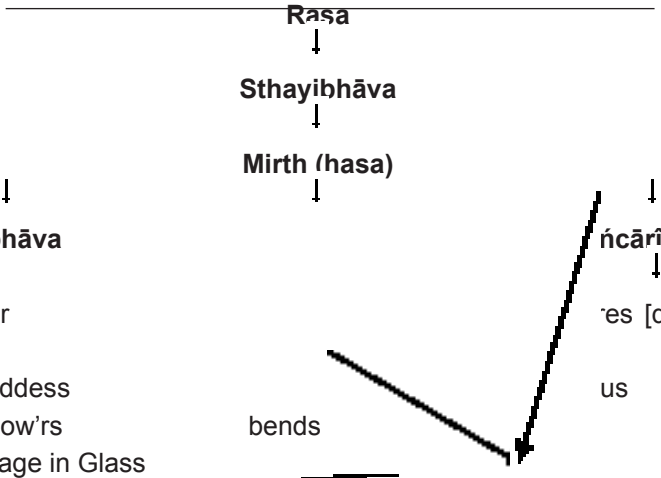
Where there is possibility of order, possibility of disorder too is to be found there only and this disorder – when of a relatively harmless kind – gives rise to laughter. Thus the essential condition for generation of Hâsya or laughter through the element of disorder or deformity is that it should essentially be of a harmless kind and must not lead to cruelty. To take an apt example of it let us take into consideration the following lines again from Alexander Pope's satirical master piece 'The Rape of the Lock':

And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd.
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, rob'd in white, the Nymph intent adores
With head uncover'd, the cosmetic Pow'rs.
A heav'nly image in the Glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her, eyes the rears;
Thinferior Priestess, at her Alter's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride.
Unnumbered Treasures ope at once, and here
The various off'rings of world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.

This Casket India's glowing Gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder Box.
The Tortise here and Elephant unite
Transform'd to combs, the speckled and the white. [7]

[The Rape of the Lock, lines……]

Pope in these verses delights in the 'artificial beauty' that he describes. At toilet table Belinda, the heroine is lavishing on her own beauty, the adoration which should be reserved for a higher object, hence incongruous. And this Vikrta (disorder) in the description of Belinda's dressing up in as pompous a manner as 'Achilles arming' is instrumental in the generation of laughter. When we put the above given situation or example in our scheme of graphical design the outcome is:



Hāsya Rasa in Pope's 'The Rape of The Lock'

Vikrta, when innocuous and harmless, often has the potential of generating uproarious laughter. For instance let us take into consideration the following poem by Shel Silverstin:

"I cannot go to School today,"
Said little Peggy Ann Mckey;
"I have the measles and the mumps,

A gash, a rash, and purple bumps.
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I've counted sixteen chicken pox
And there's one more – that's
Seventeen,
And don't you think my face looks
green?
……...
My temperature is one-o-eight.
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is…..
What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is ———— Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out to play!"[8]

[Shel Silverston: Sick]

Poor little Peggy innocently citing all the possible reasons or diseases or explanations she could think of just to skip the school (vikrta) makes one hold one's stomach and laugh but the funniest incongruity in the situation comes when she is told it's Saturday, the holiday and forgetting all the severe sign's of illness she was citing just a moment before she says good bye and runs out to play.

'Shamelessness' has been listed as another element having potential for generation of laughter. An important point to note here is that shameless can lead to laughter only and only when it does not threaten the conventions and norms of the society, when it is creating some minor disorder, a major disorder (for instance a man going about naked in the streets) will lead to disgust. The reader or the perceiver should not feel threatened by the shamelessness that he perceives. Let us for instance take the following lines from 'Beggar to Beggar Cried' by William Butler Yeats:

'Time to put of the world and go some where
And find my health again in the Sea air',
Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,
'And make my soul before my pate is bare-

And get a comfortable wife and house
To rid me of the devil in my shoes',
Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy – struck,

'And the worse devil that is between my thighs.'

And though I'd marry with a comely lass,
She need not be too comely – let it pass
…….
And cannot have a humorous happy speech."[9]

[W.B. Yeats, Beggar to Beggar Cried]

Here, in the above given situation. Vikrata, d?rs?ya and Vya?ga all three combine and prove instrumental in the generation of Hâsya. A Beggar looking ahead to getting an attractive wife, a comfortable house and gaining health present a situation which is incongruous (vikrta), his public acceptance of his physical and mental urge 'And the worse devil that is between my thighs.' is shameless (d?rs?ya) and the whole situation is a satire (vya?ga) well brought out in lines 'rich are driven by wealth as beggars by the itch". The incongruent juxtaposition of wealth and itch too leads to laughter in the situation. One thing evident from the discussion in the foregoing is that element of cruelty lurks behind the element of laughter. The old women's laughter on Han Shan's poverty is cruel and equally cruel is the laughter on the state of beggar in the present instance. But laughter has become a possibility in these instances, only because the objects of imitation (the poor Poet and Beggar) themselves participate in the laughter, overlooking the cruel they manage to look at the funny side of things.

'Greed' is another element which is largely associated wih shamelessness. When greed leads to some minor mishap and no major disaster, it is funny. As we find in the poem "When I, Good friends, Was called to Bar" by W.S. Gilbert:

In Westminster Hall I danced a dance,
.....For I thought I should never hit on a chance
Of addressing a British jury
But I soon got tired of third-class journeys,

And dinners of bread and water ;
So I fell in love with a rich attorney's
Elderly, ugly daughter.
The rich attorney, he wiped his eyes,

And replied to my fond professions;
"You shall reap the reward of your enterprise",
The briefs came trooping gaily,
And every day my voice was heard

At the Sessions or Ancient Bailey.
All thieves who could my fees afford
Relied on my orations,
And many a burglar Fve restored
To his Mends and his relations.

At length I became as rich as the Gurneys
An incubus then I thought her,
So I threw over that rich attorney's
Elderly, ugly daughter.
The rich attorney my character high
Tried vainly to disparage
And now, if you please, I'm ready to try
This Breach of Promise of Marriage ! [10]

[W.S. Gilbert, When I, Good friends, was called to Bar]

Here, the lawyer who has himself made a "breach of promise of marriage" tries out a case of Breach of Promise of Marriage and this incongruity in the situation leads to laughter. Further he is greedy and shameless– he ditches the rich lawyer, who has sponsored him, the first chance he gets in his efforts to rise, i.e to make good livelihood, in life. But all lawyers being considered greedy, it seems funny that one lawyer manages to cheat the other (for only a lawyer can cheat a lawyer). Greed can also lead to funny behaviour – stuffing oneself with food or gold, or trying to steal too many things and stumbling and falling etc More over his shameless acceptence of his act of treachery, disloyality and betrayal too leads to generation of laughter (as it is nothing new, many people try such things to get early success in life, but only a few accept the guilt).

"Tickling sensitive parts of the body" leads to a laughter that is generated by direct contact. In the perceiver, this can lead to sympathetic laughter. This can be understood in view of the fact that in an environment of laughter, one finds oneself laughing even without any known cause or reason.

"Telling fantastic tales" can, beyond any doubt, lead to comic. For instance one can take example of H.E. Bate's story "An Imporbable Tale" (about fooling someone) or Mayakov Sky's play 'Bed Bug' and the like.

"Deḍormīity' ṳhen temporary, harmless or simulated can be comic. If a lip on teeth does not fit, this deformity will give rise to either a sense of sorrow or the grotesque but if the lips are twisted and made to look grotesque, this as is both temporary and harmless, will lead to laughter.

"Dosodaharana or 'describing faults' has been listed as another Vibhâva of Hâsya. But essential condition or pre-riquisite for it to lead to laughter

is that it should be clothed in such a manner that a certain incongruity, a certain distortion (which is not too harsh) is noticeable. To put it in other words, while describing faults, the focus should be on relatively less serious defects which a perceiver, if possible, shares and so can find funny). The treatment should be such that relatively serious problems seem much less serious as in the following lines from 'The Rape of the lock':

The hungry Judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine'
The merchant from the' exchange returns in peace
And the long labours of the Toilet cease. [11]

[The Rape of the Lock, Canto III, lines 20-25]

These brilliant lines which couple by incongruity the worlds of the bourgeoisie and the proletariate with that of the leisure class could have almost seemed ominous had there not been this controlled juxtaposition [of worlds]. Thus it is treatment that is important or it is the vain in which the faults are seen or made to be seen in a work that determines the true nature of satire. Even so, a satire can become grotesque, and seem so serious that the comic element no longer emerges prominent and then what we will have instead is the 'Comedy of grotesque" as is to be seen in the works of T.S. Eliot.

The various accompanying states or Vyabhicaribhâvas of Hâsya Rasa, as already discussed in chapter II, are Dissimulation, Laziness, drowsiness, (tandrâ) sleep, dreaming, awakening, envy etc.

'Dissimulation', always holds the potential of mirth as we saw in the cheating of one Lawyer by another.

"Laziness 'dreaming', 'drowsiness' (when caused by Drinking), 'Sleep' and 'awakening' [sudden awakening of a lazy of foolish man can lead to incongruent action and hence generate laughter] have comic potentials beyond doubt. In Pope's Satirical Master piece 'The Rape of the Lock' we can find all the Vyabhicâribhâvas discussed here leading to Hâsya. To illustrate the point we can take examples of them one by one:

Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And, Sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground.
And the pressed watch returned a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,
Her guardian sylph prolonged the balmy rest. [12]
[The Rape of the Lock, Lines 15 – 20]

Here in these verses amusing presentation of the laziness and sleeping habits of the aristocratic ladies and gentlemen of the time lead to generation of laughter. Further in this poem dreaming and dissimulation lead to comic in:

Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished Care
— if e'er one vision touched thy infant thought,
of all the nurse and all the priest have thought;
of airy Cleves ….. Or virgins visited by angel-powers,
... Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
… Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,
To maids alone and children are revealed. [13]

[The Rape of the Lock, Lines 27 to 38]

And dreaming and awakening lead to mirth in:

T*his to disclose is all thy guardian can:*
Beware of all, but most beware of man!"
He said, when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leaped up, and waked his mistress with his tongue.
"Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first opened on a billet – doux;
Wounds, charms, and ordours were no sooner read,
But all the vision vanished from they head [14]

[The Rape of the Lock, Lines – 114-120]

These satirical lines with humour and wit expose to ridicule the laziness, idleness, frivolities, follies and shallowness of the aristocratic ladies and gentlemen of the time.

In all the vyabhicâribhâvas of Hâsya Rasa 'envy' seems to be a bit problematic, as the natural outcome of envy are-hatred, treachery and disaster – which are inimical to Hâsya. Laughter can be generated out of envy only and only when the cruel aspect is subverted. For instance in Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock' Clarissa's jealousy of Belinda's beauty and fame prompt her to offer a pair of scissors to the Baron in order to assist him in his wicked design (cutting of Belinda's lock of hair). But the outcome of this wicked act is painted in such a pompous manner that it generates laughter instead of sorrow or pain. For instance take a look at the presentation of Belnda's anger and grief on this wicked act:

'Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend the affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs breathe their last [15]

[The Rape of the Lock, Lines 445 to 448]

Or the Baron's rejoice on the same:

Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,
(the victor cried) the glorious prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,

…… As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed
... So long my honour, name, and praise shall live![16]

[The Rape of the Lock, Lines 451 – 460]

One thing which comes out evidently, from the discussion in the foregoing, is that for generation of laughter it is important that pity is never given a scope to emerge. This is done by putting the reader in opposition (and not in sympathy with) to the object that causes laughter. It is this distancing from the object of laughter that leads to the possible generation of mirth. In fact, even when a person laughs at himself; he manages to distance himself from himself, i.e., see himself from outside. The reader or the sa?rdaya must also be able to do so.

The element of the incongruous gives rise to the funny and their poverty, their insecurity and ageing lurk behind the shadows of the moments of hilarity.

In Nāžya āstra (VI 39-40) it is said that the imitation of ţńgāra leads to Hāsya. In ţńgāra, harsa (humour) is latent. Both the Rasas refer to positive states of mind. The end of Hāsya and ţńgāra can never be negative.

It can be well understood here, that, where laughter and love are found together, the comic element will blend into the general atmosphere of fun and festivity. With the basic ingredients – incongruity, a mild disorder, deceptions, dissimulations etc humour can be discovered almost anywhere and it can be found all the more easily in ţńgāra. □

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Editor

INSIGHTS INTO LOVE IN CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S FICTION

* Kaisa Rosalind

Writing in an age under Victorian restrictions and taboos of sex, Charlotte Bronte has defied her age and has expressed what her heart dictated. She was often termed a revolutionary in her portrayal of human feelings. The passionate intensity, the romance, the undisguised sincerity and the fresh, powerful, often poetic style of ***Jane Eyre***, were the qualities which own the heart fo her readers. Hugh Walker rightly termed it as "the wedding of romance to realism", a romance which was of "elemental human nature" (Walker 714). G.K.Chesterton remarked, "she reached the highest romance through the lowest realism" (Chesterton 71).

"Love was the breath of life to Charlotte Bronte; the be-all and end-all of human life" (Rickett 521). Highly imaginative as she was, she dealt with love in its multi-faceted form; one of them being love versus integrity or moral law. She held love in high esteem; a love that was normally based on "spiritual eqaulity and economic independence of the sexes" (Singh 114). Charlotte treated love in a rather unconventional style. A glance into her heroes and heroines testifies to this fact. Her heroes and heroines were usually people who were not renowned although each one had a beauty of one's own. It was Charlotte's firm belief that her heriones need not be beautiful. She proclaimed with confidence to her sisters: "I will prove to you that you are wrong, I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as yours" (Kumar 42). Infact most of her novels portrayed heroines who were really plain, with no benefits of rank and and beauty and they fall in love with men almost double her age.

If Charlotte Bronte is regarded as the first romantic novelist, it is because she gave a new dimension to love. She had a different outlook towards love, which Walter Allen calls: the passionate response not to sex alone, but to all experience of life with utmost intensity, a love similar to what D.H. Lawrence expressed: 'a response to the whole living world'. Expressing her feelings for Rochester, Jane uttered "I looked, and had an acute pleasure in looking, a precious, yet poignant pleasure, pure gold, with a steely point, of agony" (Jane Eyre 176). According to Heilman, "There is that peculiarly tense vivacity of talk

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between lovers ... a crafty game of love, flirting with an undefined risk, betraying a withheld avowal, savoring the approach to consummation" (173).

The concept of love as presented in ***Shirley*** in the opinion of Caroline was one that "hurts", "It is so tormenting, so racking, and it burns away our strength with its flame. In affection is nofire, only sustenance and balm" (Shirley 197). Caroline referred to this experience of love which she had for Robert that made her to suffer such torment for months together. Like a spell from Robert's secret power, she seemed to be affected. The fire that burnt within her kept consuming her uncontrollably, thus thinning her down to such an extent that she lost all appetite and was almost confined to bed. The affection she held for Shirley was on the other hand so soothing and calm that it was to her something that "supports and soothes" (197), Charlotte's concept of love is further explained through the mouth of Mrs Pryor. Conversing on love and marriage with Caroline, she said. "Life is an illusion. But not love! Love is real - the most real, the most lasting, the sweetest and yet the bitterest thing we know" (284), reflecting on her own life in the context of love and marriage which was a failure. As to its 'bitterness' it was "strong as death' (284), and as to 'their sweetness, nothing is so transitory, its date is a moment, the twinkling of an eye. The sting remains forever. It may perish with the dawn of eternity, but it tortures through time into its deepest night" (284). Mrs Pryor struggled through life taking up the odd job of a governess, enduring the reproaches and abuses of her lords and masters.

Her novels, *The Professor, Jane Eyre* and *Villette* are all representation of the segregated and naked soul responding to the experience of life with utmost intensity. Her hereoines felt very strongly about everything. The passions they knew were 'capable of creating both the worlds of heaven and hell" (Walker 715). And though her scale of writing was narrow, the 'vicarage windows', she had "a light within which made the glance a revelation" (715). "Her range is confined to the inner life, the private passions" (David 90), a powerful source of which few are endowed with.

In the description of love and love scenes there is a distinctive vein running through. As the encumbrances were in galore for the love birds to be together and articulate their sentiments, Charlotte at times resort to a kind of soliloquizing or either of the lovers indulging in or fantasizing and later speaking out his or her feelings. In ***Jane Eyre****,* it was Jane that spoke out her feelings to the readers. Whereas in ***Shirley***, the incredible sensations and feelings Louis has for Shirley, his student and now his beloved can be gauged in some of his turn of phrases; "No one who looks at my slow face can guess the vortex sometimes whirling in my heart, and engulfing thought and wrecking prudence"

(***Shirley*** 456). In ***Villette***, it is Lucy Snowe, from whom one comes to learn many of the incidents, events and the sensations of the souls.

Love is enshrined highly in the works of Charlotte Bronte. It surpassed all other virtues and priorities. Male or female, everyone considered love as the top-most value in life. Rochester goes in for a poor girl Jane in his ultimate choice of a life partner. She was a woman, who possessed none of the beauties of the world, was small in size and very plain as Rochester himself tells, "You are my little friend, are you not?" (**Jane Eyre** 219). He rejected all other women of beauty, fame and wealth for they were not genuine. Shirley, once she found her soul-mate in the person of Louis Moore became unmindful of what she possessed, and entrusted everything to him. Her absorption in him was such that "she abdicated without a word or a struggle". "Go to Mr Moore, ask Mr Moore" (**Shirley** 476) was her answer when applied to for orders. Robert Moore sharing with Mr Yorke on how he was refused by Shirley Keeldar downright, confessed, "never more will I (he) mention marriage to a woman unless I (he) feel love" (399). A person may work very hard that "credit and commerce" go well, he may work "diligently, wait patiently, bear steadily" (399) but it was love that counted ultimately.

Jane Eyre is "conspicuous within its grandiose claims for romantic love and the rapacious but tender ego of its heroine" (**Stonyk** 128). It is one of the most passionate of romantic novels because "it throbs with the sensuality of a woman's growing love for a man; there is the deep longing of the lonely heart in every line" (Nudd 140). Charlotte Bronte created a heroine who wanted to learn what love is and how to find it, just as she herself did. Unlike most of her predecessors, she accorded her main characters with overpoweringly forceful passions that were not always logical and often could not be articulated in ordinary language. There is a depth of inexpressible "fiery interiority imbues both Rochester and Jane with a kind of mystery that has always been charismatic to readers" (**Bloom** 104).

As we unravel the treasury of ***Jane Eyre***, we come to understand that it was at Lowood that Jane chance upon the sustaining power of love for the first time from Miss Temple and her companion, Helen Burns. It was as if "a good fire is ignited into the child life of the orphan, Jane. This strengthens her craving for love" (Nestor 1992) and she declared to Helen.... "if others don't love me, I would rather die than live" (**Jane Eyre** 70). Her pursuit of love, liberty and equality was apparent. Henceforth it was always a forward journey in love.

A very gradual but steady development took shape in the life of Rochester and Jane. Right from the start, cupid struck in the uncanny and plain

Jane who all through, had only experiences that were painful and harsh save the ones she had from Helen Burns and Miss Temple at Lowood. Though all conventions of the "sweet nothings" exchange between lovers was lacking, yet the moment Rochester accidentally met Jane in his fall, something unusual strikes him. The free, frank and courageous way in which she spoke made Rochester enquire at length even in such moments about here whereabouts. Though the incident was insignificant with "no romance, no interest in a sense; yet it marked with caange one single hour" (JE 116) from the monotonous life that marked Jane's day. She felt great that her help was "needed and claimed" (117). Later she recorded that the "new face", "was like a new picture introduced to the gallery of memory" (117). Time and again Jane made it very clear that there was nothing very handsome in his exterior with "broad and jetty eyebrows"; "decisive nose", "full nostrils", "grim mouth, chin and jaw" (121), yet her heart longed for him, longed that she be called to his presence. Though rank and wealth sever" them wide apart from each other, still she had in her "brain and heart", her "blood and nerves", that "assimilates" her "mentally to him" (177). To Jane love was the power rwhich sustained life.

Most of the heroes and heroines of Charlotte were charged with powerful emotions. Judith O'Neill categorically states; "No more distinct characteristic of Currer Bell's genius can be named, than the depth of her capacity for all passionate emotions" (O'Neill 20). In the portrayal of Jane and Rochester, both were passionate characters who had an enormous capacity to love. Though neither of them was physically attractive yet they were definitely well suited. Jane felt his "presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire" (**Jane Eyre** 147-8). Because of the passionate love Jane had for Rochester, she could not stomach Ingram Blanche, a new woman in his life. The jealousy she felt was seen when "she began pointing out her own insufficiencies and the things she hated about herself" (Suberth. www.oppapers). In ***Shirley***, Caroline, pining for Robert Moore was inconsolable. She desired that she should see him once again and she prayed earnestly for Heaven's favour. Lucy Snowe's need to be loved was so acute, that to her death with love was sweeter than a life without love. She exclaimed: "Better, perhaps, to die quickly a pleasant death, than drag or long a charmless life" (**Villette** 217).

Charlotte's concept of love was one that usually ended in marriage, in happy union of kindred souls. Rochester and Jane in ***Jane Eyre*** were ultimately united after all hurdles were mastered at the cost of even loosing one's ego and property. And it was Caroline's belief that "When people love, the next step is they marry" (**Shirley** 75). In **T*he Professor***, William and Frances ~~were blissfully united and were blessed with a son, so were the twin couples of~~

Louis-Shirley and Robert-Caroline in ***Shirley***. The contrary is strongly wrought as well. The proposal extended by her cousin St. John Rivers to Jane, whose favoured virtues were "endurance, perseverance, industry, talent" (**Jane Eyre** 380) was turned down by Jane for "reason rather than feeling was his guide" (Kapadia 409). He regarded marriage as a 'business arrangement"; he thought of Jane as his "potential junior partner in his missionary work". Jane curtly said "I scorn your idea of love, I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer" (Jane Eyre 413). She recounted her "ecclesiastical cousin's… experiment kisses" as "marble kisses or ice kisses". (403) and feared marrying him an "iron shroud" (408) would be to "endure all the forms of love" as a wife, though "the spirit" would be "quite absent" (410). Jane abhorred such a life and she refused his offer. In ***The Professor,*** William was emotionally seduced by Zoraide, a fair English woman, with "a certain serenity of eye, and freshness of complexion, most pleasing to behold" (**The Professor** 75). As always with Charlotte Bronte, infatuated love and external beauty could not last long as Zoraide presented herself as an embodiment of lust and fraud. William walked out of her life and sought for someone who could be his soulmate, a true companion in life. Lucy Snowe in *Villette* sounded similar echo when she declared: "The love born of beauty was not mine" (**Villette** 437). She actually fell in for M. Paul Emanuel, a "dark little man" (118), who when loved, emerged "well and cheerful" (465) and was acceptable and most pleasing in her sight.

Love is depicted from different angles in Charlotte's novels. There is the "pure" Christian love shown in the person of Helen Burns that took in everything in the spirit of Jesus Christ whom she worshipped as her God. There was no room for revenge or hatred but was marked by forgiveness, tolerance and forbearance. It was a selfless love that reached out to others in love. Later in life when Jane faced crisis, whether or not to be the mistress of Rochester, she turned her mind to choices which were nobler, upright. When he earnestly implored her, from her lips burst "involuntarily" "God help me!" (**Jane Eyre** 308). She was also able to forgive her aunt Mrs Reed who had ill treated her in her childhood. The consequence of the absence of this love was seen in the lives of the Reeds that could not take into their life the language of love in thought or action.

Mercenary marriage was common in Victorian times. A very clear evidence was the marriage contract of Rochester and Bertha Mason. Rochester blinded by the external beauty and his father and brother by avarice, had to pay a heavy price all through his life. Dickens' novels too abound with mercenary marriages. In ***Hard Times,*** the twenty year old, young beautiful daughter, ~~Louisa of Mr Gradgrind was married to old Bounderby of fifty; in ***Oliver Twist,***~~

Oliver's father was forced to marry the young daughter of a rich, retired navel officer. All these marriages naturally failed miserably.

Charlotte "puritanically rejects physical beauty, born of flesh as unimportant" (Singh 116) and most of her heroes and heroines were unattractive. Shirely and Caroline in ***Shirley*** were the exceptions. The union of Rochester and Bertha, occasioned by beauty and sensuality and the prospect of a union between Rochester and Blanche Ingram, marked by greed for finance and social status with no true love did not hold on. Jane by her wit, intelligence and calm morality with no external beauty won Rochester's heart. Only those tested in the fire of genuine love survived the test of time. Morality, integrity and internal beauty swept over the flesh.

Charlotte was at times blamed for alleged "grossness" and "coarseness" especially unbecoming of a clergyman's daughter. Some critics were of opinion that the plot of ***Jane Eyre*** was "full of sex and danger" (Bentley 19). A gamut representing such can be perceived; a victimized heroine, a mad woman, an illegitimate daughter, a bigamous marriage, an attempt at seduction, a hasty flight from a lover, another proposal, a final passionate re-union. These in fact whetted the Victorian reader's appetite for Charlotte's novels though a few eyebrows were raised. "The sexual symbols are so frequent and crude…. the imagery is sometimes so gross that the reader must laugh if he does not close his eyes and skip" (Burkhart 19-20). Mrs Margaret Oliphant, writing in 1887, said, "There is but one strain of intense sentiment in these books, the desire of a lonely creature longing for its mate…." (Burkhart 20).

Age was never a barrier in love in Charlotte's presentation. Most of the heroes in her novels who fell in love had much younger heroines. If ever there was a block it was the socio-economic status. Paul and Rochester were almost twenty years senior to Lucy Snowe and Jane; there was a huge gap in Shirley and her teacher friend Louis. Jane had to wait till she had acquired something that made her "dependent" on no one. Finally it paved way to their union.

Although Jane's love for Rochester was so strong, "almost" her "hope of heaven" (**Jane Eyre** 277), but once she came to understand his state, she refused to be his mistress; she contended, "Mr Rochester, I must leave you" (307). She would prefer to be without anything rather than do what she thought was wrong. She would not allow herself to be manipulated by anybody. Hence they live in their own different set up for a while so as to experience an individual time of character development before they could finally enjoy peace together. Phyllis Bentley opined that "there is emphatically a recurring pattern in Char-

lotte's literary carpet…. A deeper unity is achieved by the consistent theme; there is always the conflict between high integrity and worldliness" (Bentley 7).

"Lovers in Charlotte's fiction do not fall in love, they discover love through mutual understanding and confidence, and love their soul mates, and rise in love", states Singh (Singh 157). Lucy Snowe in ***Villette*** had always taken Dr John as a lover. She treasured his letter as "blood in my veins" (**Villette** 231). But he took her as "my poor little god-sister" (231), an indication that she was only just that to him in their relationship. And true Dr John built up a close bond with Paulina and was united with her in matrimony. When Lucy Snowe met M. Paul, she seemed to be drawn to him, and they gradually became intimate. This discovery of love and its subsequent building up are seen also in the life of Rochester and Jane and in the case of William and Frances in ***The Professor***.

Charlotte Bronte was a realist to the core. She would never sanction a relationship governed by passion alone. When the question of passion versus reason arose, it was reason that gained ground. Charlotte's heroes and heroines were redeemed thus: Jane from bigamy, William from Zoraide, the seductress, Shirley from a mercenary marriage, Robert from vanity and guilt.

"Eden" has become "a love myth, tender and ideal, of perfect shared sexuality" (Burkhart 30) to Charlotte. She employed it in all her four novels while trying to express romantic, sexual love; a world where there is no growing old or weary, where there is no seasons, no time, nature always friendly and the lovers themselves felt so natural and free and are one with it. Describing the occasion and the setting when Rochester proposed to Jane, she expressed: "I went apart into the orchard. No nook in the grounds more sheltered and more Eden-like; it was full of trees, it bloomed with flowers" (**Jane Eyre** 250); it was in Eden-like ambience that Lucy and Paul met for the last time in the Faubourg Clotilde in ***Villette***.

Of all the priorities that Charlotte has placed she has made it very clear that Love mattered more than anything else. Some weaknesses may be tolerated; some humiliations may be endured; some delay or imperfection may be excused if they all finally lead to genuine love. In the marital promise made in the religious circle, it often quoted that their contract with each other in marriage will be "till death do us part". Going a step further, here we deal with *Love that is stronger than death.* While love is discussed often all through her writings, we can see various shades of love being presented. Love is a

many sided gift that people are blessed with. With the attitude and style of life that Charlotte lived and proposed to her readers, physical beauty was not of very high significance for her. In her presentation bodily attractiveness and external comeliness do not matter as much as other more lasting aspects of love. Integrity – a high level of it – on the other hand coincides with Love. The more genuine and honest one's life is the more loving and lovable one could be. Longing for love could mean for her, desire for a time when there will be no prejudices and it is here Jane comes to Rochester who is with "seared vision" and "crippled strength" (**Jane Eyre** 449) to be "his prop and guide" (454). This could be the result of her own experience in which prejudices of all kinds divided people from one another. In love and mutual respect, prejudices could also crumble.□

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An Exposition of the cultural problems of diaspora in chitra divakaruni's **The Vine of Desire**

* M.S. Antony Ophilia

Cultural identify is something which every human being experiences to a great or less extent depending on the individual. Man often feels a deep vibration with his cultural heritage and tradition, but people, who have an opportunity to live for an extended period of time in a country other than their own, can also experience this vibration in a different culture in which they live. The Vine of Desire, written by Chitra Divakaruni, is a novel which portrays such a vibration, and it is a sequel to Chitra Banerjee's earlier novel, Sister of My Heart. In The Vine of Desire, Divakaruni explores the emotional bond between two cousins, Anju and Sudha, whose lives have been entwined since birth in their native city of Calcutta, and now they are leading separate lives in America and India respectively. Chris Barsanti comments on love portrayed in the novel: "Love is a tangled ticket of thorns in Divakaruni's new novel of Indian immigrants who try to keep their lives together in San Francisco despite the distractions of family pressures and unspoken tensions'.[1]

In The Vine of Desire, devastating events in the lives of both the cousins bring them together. Anju in America has had a miscarriage, and Sudha has walked out of her husband's house to avoid her mother-in-law's compulsion to abort the female fetus. She also tries to escape from the suffocating embrace of her first love with her former boyfriend, Ashok who insists on taking care of her and her daughter. Hurt and saddened by the events of their lives, Anju and

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Sudha reach out to one another for comfort and affection when Sudha arrives in California. The novelist says: "The day Sudha stepped off the plain from India into Anju's arms leaving a ruined marriage behind, their lives changed forever. And not just Sudha's and Anju's. Sunil's life changed too. And baby Dayita's also."[2] Complications arise when Anju's husband, Sunil, discovers that he is deeply attracted to Sudha, whom he met on the night of his wedding with Anju. The tension between the wife and husband mounts when a third person (Sudha) enters their conjugal life, and this creates some never racking moments in the novel. Anju buffers herself against her husband's emotional rejection of her, and she overcomes a deep sense of betrayal by Sudha – a process that proves painful for Anju whose sense of value as a woman is tied up with her success as a wife and mother.

Sudha is alternately soothed and stifled as she assumes the role of the maid, cleaning, cooking and caring for the household. Sudha feels the necessity in understanding more about the American culture and life style. She says in the novel:

> *I should be more like Anju, I know that I need to learn about this country. The TV, in spite of all its faults, can offer me images. Names. The clues of accents. But I get confused. There is a plane crash, all 262 passengers killed for one minute….*[3].

Sometimes she could not digest the life style and attitude of the Americans. On all such occasions she goes back to her homeland in memory and compares and contrasts the cultures of the two lands. The cultural problems of diaspora are well wrought in the novel.

To avoid restlessness, Anju goes back to college, pursues a creative writing program, and realizes that she can write. This gives her an escape from her growing dissatisfaction with her marriage. In a small two bed room apartment in America, the lives of two women who know each other intimately, a man and his unlawful passion for his wife's cousin, and a destitute like woman's ability to adapt herself to new surroundings in an alien land are unfolded in a tale of sensitivity, passion, yearning, love, and tradition.

Anju, with the help of creative writing assignments and extra curricular activities in the college, sheds her old value system and takes steps toward living a new life. While Anju turns to scholarly pursuits and creative outlets for self-determination, Sudha, in order to provide shelter and food for her daughter, works round the clock for a bitter octogenarian Indian, living a America who pines for his homeland, India. However, her work and a new formed connection with the octogenarian prove to be a way for Sudha to come to terms with her feelings of estrangement, with her cousin, Anju. At one point, Sudha reflects:

So many violences done to me. My mother pounding my life into the shape of her desires. My mother-in-law wanting to cut from it whatever she considered unseemly…. Sunil plunging into the center of my body, corrosive with need.[4]

Sudha realizes that even though she can choose to wear either a sari or blue jeans and a t-shirt in her new world, she will only ever feel a sense of belonging to India.

Divakaruni's women characters emerge as people of substance. They learn to make peace with the events life seems to thrust on them, and they try to correct their mistakes, and grow as they hope for progress and peace. Sonia Chopra observes:

The tormenting emotions that result when the characters choose to throw the baggage of their culture and create a new identity … the choices they make and the interaction they have with the immigrant community in America and through contact with their family … forces them to question their existence and mortality and find answers.[5]

The novel is peopled by Indian immigrants. They have hopes and dreams of their own in a land of alien culture which they are not familiar with. Lalit tells Sudha about the immigrant experience, "All immigrants are dreamers, You're saying? Yeah, but they're practical about it. They know what's okay to dream about, and what isn't", [6] Indeed the novel presents a realistic picture of the picture of contemporary immigrant experience.

The novelist makes a portrayal of Sudha's and Anju's present life in America and their past in India, and this fills in the early sections of the The Vine of Desire, and arouses the reader's interest. The Vine of Desire is structurally intact, and it departs significantly from its predecessor, Sister of My Heart, as much in its mediation on the questions of home and identity in the South Asian diaspora, as in the changing philosophic premises that has made an impact on Divakaruni's later novels.

Divakaruni's use of different story telling techniques – the third person narrative, interior monologue, epistolary exchange, diary entries, stream-of-consciousness technique, dream sequences- powerfully convey the pain and confusion the heroines feel during their moments of life-changing awareness evoked by the western culture. The novelist expertly juxtaposes the challenger, freedom, and crassness of modern day America with the contemporary issues, both personal and cultural. The cultural disparity between India and America is clearly pictured in the novel. Sudha thinks of the stubbornness of her daughter

in the light of the two cultures: “In India this stubbornness would have been a disadvantage, something to be scolded-even beaten – out of a girl. But here (in America) she’s not sure. All rules are different in America, and she knows none of them yet”.[7]

Divakaruni represents the current crop of writers, who are concerned with crossing over from one culture to another without compromising on either negotiating new boundaries or remaking themselves. In her writings the diaspora with its shifting boundaries and conflicting encounters between different cultures is an important locus in which nationalisms and literatures redefine themselves. Although she captures different aspects of the cultural encounter, the ways in which identities are ordered in her novels form a common matrix of her writings.

In The Vine of Desire, Divakaruni presents how the American culture influences Sudha. She is excited by the American cultural principles. She says in the novel:

> *Live for yourself… I’m not sure what it means. I’m not sure I know how to do it and still be a good person. And I want to, you know. I still want… and terrible emptiness. I fell like a flyaway helium balloon – all people I know are on the ground… living for others.*[8]

With the help of others, Sudha tries to understand the complexities of the American culture and Lalit helps her a lot in her perception. As a piece of advice to Sudha, Lalit says,”There is a lot about America that’s unexpected. Don’t be in too much of a hurry to make up your mind about things or people”.[9]

Even though the novel begins with the much anticipated reunion of the two cousins, who had been so close in their childhood, their intimacy and trust have been disrupted by the unavoidable

Stirrings of jealousy, when Anju, the less beautiful of the two cousins, discovers the powerful attraction her husband Sunil feels for Sudha. Divakaruni deals with a new facet of immigrant experience in the sense that the movement is not necessarily a physical one or from east to west.[10] When Sudha arrives, the novel seems poised for a formulaic trajectory of adultery, conflict of loyalties, and a traumatic break down of relationships.

The novel exposes the predictable outcome of the triangular love contest, and surprises the reader with its ability to interrogate the very conventions of sentimentality that seems to originate from the conjugal love of Sunil and

Anju. After a somewhat long anticipation, on the part of the reader, the inevitable physical encounter between Sunil and Sudha occurs, carrying the fleeting suggestions that a new familial bond might be established between Sunil, Sudha, and her daughter Dayita. The aftermath of this passionate encounter is the destruction of Sunil and Anju's marriage, a rift between the cousins, and the departure of Sunil to a life as a single man in another city in America. Anju's marriage which began with such fairytale promise, facilitated by the excitement of beginning life in a new country with a handsome, considerate, and generous husband, disintegrates under the strain of immigrant life; the isolation and the disappointment drive a wedge in the marriage, and Sudha provides the final thrust for this collapse.

Divakaruni does not reinstate the institution of marriage in her depiction of South Asian immigrant life in the novel. She repudiates the lure of sentimental closures, when Ashok, Sudha's childhood lover, embarks on an ill-considered journey to America to persuade her to return to India with him. Unlike **Pakeezah**, the Hindi film that is constantly referred to in relation to Sudha and Ashok's long quest for each other, the novel does not end with the reunion of the long-lost lovers after the complications of a failed marriage, and a transcontinental journey.

Bidding adieu to the conventional concept of marriage, Divakaruni fashions two alternative destinies for the cousins who have been brought up to believe in the primacy of marriage in their lives as women. The novel chronicles Anju's discovery of her own literary voice through the shapes she seeks to give to the chaotic incidents in her life which drive her to the edge of suicide, in the writing assignments for her creative writing classes in college. By producing Anju's writing assignments, letters, and other fragments, in conjunction with the comments and the feedback offered by her professors, the novel becomes a metafictional response to the act of creating a narrative out of the dislocations of immigrant life. In Anju's assignment," Draupadi's Garden", Divakaruni blends myths and lyricism, all derived from Indian cultural tradition, in order to re-imagine the transformation of women's identities in South Asian diaspora.

Anju clears the doubts of her friends about India. She always gets bad news about India in America which forces her to give elaborate explanations, and sometimes she feels infuriated. On such occasions Chitra Divakaruni makes a fine portrayal of Indian diaspora, and Anju's character endorses it. Parallel to Anju's immigrant experience, the novel charts Sudha's choice of becoming financially self-reliant by accepting the job of a nurse for an old man. She tries to understand and evaluate the American culture in her lonely struggle to survive in the immigrant land. She compares the social system in India and America

when she leaves the house of Anju.

Thorugh Sudha's understanding of the new land (America), the novelist clearly portrays the cultural problems and possibilities. Sudha finds consolation from her loneliness in the folk songs of Bengal countryside. This shows the influence of the Indian culture on her. Homeland is the final solace for the immigrant's loneliness in spite of the comfort offered in the new found land.

Divakaruni's satiric portrayal of the new-age couple, Myra and Trideep, Sudha's employers, provides a lighter touch to the novel strewn with the gloom of broken relationships and nervous breakdowns. Myra's comment of Indian women are strong. Sudha's life in Trideep's family gives her a lot of chance to think about the disparities between the two cultures. She is successful in establishing a bond with the crabby old man, Trideep's father, and at the end of the novel, she takes him back to his native town in North Bengal. The old man believes that America is "just where I live, it's not home".[11] The old man's longing for the landscape of his childhood, his fear that he may never see his homeland again add a dimension of poignancy to the novel. At the end, Sudha is instrumental in fulfilling his dream of returning home.

Divakaruni thus portrays in the novel the gender oppressions rooted in Indian culture along with the freedom offered to women in America. She contrasts the two cultures clearly in poetical terms by reconstructing personal and national histories simultaneously in a powerful and persuasive narrative. In this novel, the American culture is more dominant and at the same time, there are various instances in which the reader can find the echoes of Indian culture also. □

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Predicament of Indian women in the select novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai.

* Dr. T. Ramakrishnan

A study in comparative literature paves the way for a more comprehensive and adequate understanding of the works and authors. It is an interaction between literatures written in various languages and also an extension of healthy critical procedures adopted by readers of literature in all periods and cultures. Mulk Raj Anand and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai in many of their novels expose the basic conflict of the traditional attitude of man-woman relationship and the atrocities done by men on women. They consider the sufferings of women as social injustice by stronger and more experienced men-folk. They have raised their voice against the grievous unjust practices done against women. They choose many women characters to serve this purpose. They write novels deriving strength from their actual experiences with ordinary people in India. In each novel, the inspiration for writing is the passionate desire to help these suffering masses of people in their struggle to improve their lot and find their place in the world as free individuals. Though writing in two different languages, Anand in English and Pillai in Malayalam, and hailing from the northern-most and southern –most parts of India, Anand was born in Peshawar, and Pillai was born in Alappuzha, their fiction has striking similarities.

In **Untouchable,** though Bakha is at the core of the novel, his sister Sohini appears meek and patient. Women suffer not only through men but also through women. They have to face a lot of hardships and abuses from women also. At the time of getting water from the well the washer woman, Gulabo, insults and scolds Sohini, "you illegally begotten!...You bitch of a sweeper women" (17).

In **Two Leaves and a Bud**, Anand provides a sexually starved cruel man, Reggie Hunt, who exploits the women workers in Assam Tea Estate. Anand brings out an insight into the miserable condition of the women workers in India through Narain's description of Reggi Hunt, The Assistant Manager of the Machpherson tea estate, and the plight of coolie women in Assam Tea Estate: "He is very badmash Sahib. He is always drunk. And he has no consideration for anyone's mother or sister. He is openly living with three coolie women" (42). The workers are either lashed or imprisoned when they refuse to offer their wives to Reggie Hunt. This is evident from the words of Narain: "The coolie from Ranchi was lashed, because he refused to give his wife to

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the Ashashtant platner. The Sahib had Ranbir imprisoned, and took his wife" (171). The women are prone to the blatant sexual assaults of their employers. Anand depicts the fear of the sahib in the minds' of the women workers in the following line: "The coolie women shuffled like hens at the arrival of a much dreaded cock" (42).

In **Untouchable**, the working women even in temple are not spared by men who call themselves as priests. Anand portrays the hypocrisy of the holy priest who tries to molest Sohini but resents the presence of Bakha in the temple. Sohini explains the indecent incident in detail to her brother: "He-e-e just teased me… and then when I was bending down to work, he came and held me by my breasts" (54). The expression of Sujatha is apt to describe the pathetic condition of the women and the coarse behaviour of the priest: "After the molestation of Sohini by Pandit Kali Nath, Bakha was in distress and anger but he could not react for the latter belonged to the upper caste" (60). Bakha curses the priest and thinks of his sister that she should not have been born at all, "So beautiful; So beautiful and so accursed. I wish she had been the ugliest women in the world. Then no one would have teased her!...Oh, God, why was she born, why she born" (57).

In **Two Measures of Rice** too, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai describes the brutal violation of Chirutha's modesty. The women folk of serfs - the Pulayis and Parayis always live under the threat of the violation of their honour by the upper class people. Chirutha narrates the incident detailing what Chacko has done, "Chirutha showed her chest to Mariya. It bore signs of nail scratches. The edge of her loin-cloth was also ripped. But she struggled herself free from Chacko's grip and fled" (62). This is a tip of an iceberg that the Pulaya and Pariah girls always live in constant fear of rape. This kind of molestation is seen in the novel **Two Leaves and a Bud** also. Reggie Hunt is an embodiment of evil who is so lustful and exploit the working women and their daughters sexually. He does not leave any body's wife or daughter unmolested. One day he finds Gangu's daughter, Leila, plucking leaves all alone. He advances towards her and tries to put his hand round her waist. But she escapes from his clutches and runs away from him.

Though the novel, **Two Measures of Rice,** has central theme of revolution, the plight of the oppressed women is discernible. For instance, Pillai attracts the attention of the readers to the miserable condition of the women workers in the paddy fields of Kuttanad. Mariya says, "there wasn't a parayi or Pulai who was touched by anyone except her own husband. But today our girls have their eyes on the young Thambarans" (70).

Sohini, Bakha's sister in **Unotuchable**, and Chirutha, Koren's wife in **Two Measures of Rice**, are characters with their own distinctive personalities. The experiences which they encounter depict the sad plight of women commu-

nity. In **Untouchable**, the temple priest after the molestation of Sohini escapes from the anger of the public. His trump card is untouchability. Sohini elaborates to Bakha: "When I screamed, he came out shouting that he had been defiled" (53). Bakha is unable to bear such a painful experience in his life. He wants to take vengeance on the priest: "I will go and kill him! And he rushed blindly towards the courtyard" (55). At last he gives up the idea of killing him because the serfdom of thousands of years has humbled him.

In **Two Leaves and a Bud**, the villain, Reggie too escapes from the clutches of law after killing Gangu. At the time of trying to molest her, Leila evades from Reggie. Frustrated Reggie shoots blindly and the bullet kills the oncoming Gangu who comes there to rescue his daughter. Reggie is brought up for judgement on the charge of murder. But the jury unanimously declares a verdict, "you are discharged" (276). On the contrary in **Two Measures of Rice**, Chacko dies at the hands of Koren when he tries to rape Koren's wife Chirutha, "Chacko was battered to death" (99). In Anand's **Untouchable** and **Two Leaves and a Bud** the villains, the priest, Pandit Kali Nath and Reggie escape unhurt even after doing crime against women. But in Pillai's **Two Measures of Rice** Chacko is killed for his shameful act against Chirutha. It is clearly seen that women are taken to task, humiliated and suffered at the hands of cruel men wherever they are-in hut, in the forest and even in the temple.

Anand and Pillai reveal striking similarities towards the sufferings of women and their status. They have chosen some women characters to depict their sufferings. Anand's women are mostly silent sufferers where as Pillai's are brave and they boldly face challenges in their lives. Both the writers highlight the miserable plight of women in the contemporary society and make fervent calls for their welfare and liberation. They share the view that social transformation can no longer be achieved in India until the condition of women is improved. This is evident from the fact that various women's organisations have come into existence to enhance the betterment of women. □

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VIJAY TENDULKAR'S **SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION** AS A FOCUS OF SUPPRESSED WOMEN

* Dr. V.N. Manjula

Vijay Tendulkar is a leading contemporary Indian playwright, screen and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator. For the past four decades he has been the most influential dramatist and theatre personality in Marathi. He has written thirty plays and twenty-three one-act plays. His output in Marathi also includes eleven plays for children, four collections of short stories, one novel, and five volumes of literary essays and social criticism. His contribution to literature has made him an outstanding personality.

Tendulkar's Silence! The Court is in Session is a fascinating play in gender issues. It is a feminist tract defending the freedom of woman to carve a life for her in the male dominated society. The play is so realistic that the action can take place anywhere in India. A group of seven members comes to a village to perform a play. The play begins, when Samant, a local resident opens a room. Miss. Benare who accompanies him, while the rest of them are left behind flatters him. He feels embarrassed by her nearness. She explains about her profession and complains that because of a bit of slander she has been dismissed. She asserts that her life is her own. While speaking thus, she unconsciously touches her stomach. She stops, regains control and sings a song to herself.

Oh, I,ve got a sweet heart
……...
I'll tell you a secret-
He wants to marry me.
But Mummy says, I'm too little
To have such thoughts as these.

Samant, then explains her about the Mock Trial. Benare agrees and describes about the characters of Mrs&Mr Kashikar. As they have no children, they have adopted a son Balu Rokde. Next she talks about Sukhatme, a great barrister. Then she explains about Prof.Damle an intellectual and one who prides himself on book learning. But he turns himself away when there is a real problem. Lastly she describes about Ponkshe, a scientist! Inter-failed.

Few members arrive and a mock court with its furniture is arranged. The trial is about a case against President Johnson for producing atomic weapons. Benare says that they have done tonight's atomic weapons trial several times. When the discussions are on about who should be the accused, Benare goes away. Sukhatme suggests the name Benare to be accused as he wishes that a woman in the dock will give the trial a different complexion. They want the charge made against her social significance. Ponkshe takes the lead and announces her to be the accused of infanticide. Benare is stunned. Kashikar repeats the same charge against her. But Benare pretends that she is not afraid of a trial of this sort. Sukhatme, as a lawyer and Kashikar as a judge start the case. They argue the timings for the spitting of the pan. Kashikar becomes serious and informs that silence must be observed while the court is in session.

Benare pleads not guilty of the charge. Sukhatme acts also as a public prosecutor and accuses Benare for the charge and praises motherhood. Mrs. Kashikar also joins with him. Sukhatme calls Ponkshe as the first evidence. He informs that the accused is an unmarried woman, having relationship with any man, married or unmarried. Karnik, the great actor, is the next witness. He tells that he has not seen Benare in a compromising situation andd has dragged in the name of Rokde of having seen Benare in such a situation just for fun.

Sukhatme now calls Rokde to the witness stand and says that his evidence is important for the trial. Rokde informs that he has seen her in Prof. Damle's room. On hearing him, Benare gets angry and asks him not to mention about her private life into the trial.Samat also joins Rokde and informs that her behaviour is exemplary. Samant as the next witness announces the court that he has heard a woman crying pleading that Prof. Damle will be guilty of murdering two lives. Benare protests and tells that she will go away if anyone speaks about her. She finds herself locked.

Mrs.Kashikar puts Benare forcibly into the witness-box. When forced Benare refuses to take the oath. Mrs.Kashikar, as the next witness says that Benare behaves freely with men. She goes home with Prof.Damle after each performance and has even overtures to Rokde in the dark. Rokde too agrees but Benare shouts that it is a lie. The next witness is Ponkshe. He tells that Benare always has a poison bottle in her bag and has informed that she is pregnant. She has worshipped Damle's intellect but he has deserted her. She has requested Ponkshe to marry her but Ponkshe has refused. He adds that she has tried to laugh away telling that she has been only joking but had tears in her eyes.

Karnik is called next. He says that Benare has attempted suicide when she was fifteen because of her affair with her maternal uncle. He also accuses her

for her licentious behaviour. Kashikar, again becomes the witness and informs that Benare is about to be dismissed from the school where she is working as it is sin to be pregnant before marriage. At this, Benare is about to put the bug poison in her mouth but Karnik dashes forward and strikes it away. The bottle rolls towards the feet of Ponkshe who picks it on the judge's table.

The prosecution is over. Sukhatme argues that the charge is dreadful and the accused must be punished severly. When asked Benare, She says that her life is purely personal. People around her are like mortal remains of the twentieth century. Looking around she begins to speak. As a girl of fourteen, she has fallen in love with her maternal uncle but has been rejected by her. When she grew up she has been in love with an intellectual who has admired her only physically. But she carries a tender as a witness .She lives only for her son. The judgment is announced. The womb should be destroyed. But Benare cries aloud that she will not let it happen.

The people come to witness the show. Benare sits motionless. From somewhere unseen her own voice is heard singing softly,

The parrot to the sparrow said,
'Why, oh why, are your eyes so red?
'Oh, my dear friend, what shall I say?
Someone has stolen my nest away'.
'Oh, brother crow, oh, brother crow.
Were you there? Did you see it go?'
No, I don't know. I didn't see.
What are your troubles to do with me?'
O sparrow, sparrow, poor little sparrow…

The article emphasizes on the central character's struggle in the male dominated society. Man has made woman submissive devoid of her feelings and emotions. Man due to his dominant position in the society, has established his assumptions, has spelled out his position and has defined the area in which a woman has to operate. Woman, on the other hand is assigned only a subordinate, secondary and subservient role to suit and satisfy the over-all supremacy of man.

The article therefore portrays the loneliness and despair of the central character Miss. Benare. It also depicts how middle class men act and react amidst their daily preoccupation. Today the movement for liberation for their participation in both economical and political activities has led them to be decision makers, industrialists, administrators and heads of the countries and states. But still, there are many women who are deprived of their rights, subjected to all forms

of discrimination, exploitation, degradation and injustice.

To serve the cause of women, to enable them to have economic independence, social upliftment, education and spiritual enlightenment are the need of the hour. To quote the words of Tagore,

I slept and dreamt,
That life is all joy,
I woke and saw,
That life is all service,
I served and I saw,
That service is joy.

Women can find fulfillment in service to mankind. Women should not allow circumstances to defeat and destroy them instead they should remember that there is enough light to put out the darkness in the world. □

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Redefining the Role:
Conflict and Confrontation in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*

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Indian writing in English has now entered a new phase – the phase of an inimitable representation of the New Indian Woman who is dissatisfied with the inhibiting cultural, natural or sexual roles assigned to her by the patriarchy. This new woman views herself as the object of cultural/social oppressions and attempts to rebel against them. But at the same time, she reflects the inability to reject her cultural/social background totally and hence fails to transcend the horizons depicting a revolutionary spirit. She therefore stands at cross-roads, caught between tradition and modernity.

Shashi Deshpande's novelistic world, like that of most other contemporary Indian English women novelists, is women-centered. She has re-incarnated the new Indian woman and has re-inforced the female dilemma in her novels. She concentrates on the theme of meaninglessness and sexual confusion suffered by women in tradition-oriented institutions. For Deshpande's women, marriage is a situation full of conflicts. They suffer, question and look for answers. This is precisely what happens to Sarita in ***The Dark Holds No Terrors (DHT)*** and Jaya in ***That Long Silence (LS).***

The Dark Holds No Terror tells the story of a marriage on the rocks. Sarita (Saru) is a 'two – in one woman' who in the day time is a successful doctor and at night 'a terrified trapped animal' in the hands of her husband, Manohar (Manu) who is an English teacher in a third rate college. As a child, Saru had seen the predicament of the grandmother separated from her cruel husband and considered 'an unwanted burden' by her own people. From then on, economic independence becomes her goal in life, which Saru takes to be an insurance against subordination or suppression. Every move she makes in life is towards the realization of the goal.

Jaya in ***That Long Silence*** is torn between building a self as a writer and a self as a wife and mother. Jaya is basically a modern woman rooted in tradition, whereas her husband Mohan is a traditionalist rooted in customs.

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The difference between their outlook is so great that they fail, time and again, to understand each other. Shashi Deshpande relates this as a story of a particular couple, but the power relation in the patriarchal structure, the gender differentiation, and the typical struggles of a woman to define herself, take on the dimension of the condition and place of the Indian women in society.

Saru grows up and acquires education against her mother's will. She revolts against her parents and runs away to get married to Manohar a person of her own choice. Saru marries him when she meets him as an equal - a promising poet and the Secretary of Literary Association, Debating Union and Dramatic Society. The life that they begin together eventually becomes a power race of two egoistic people in which she overtakes him effortlessly. She understands that Manu is no Shelley after all and her respect for him wanes when she recognizes him to be a failure. When her success as a doctor begins to highlight his failure, he degenerates. Her march towards progress nullifies Manu's existence and reduces him to a zero.

Her profession builds a wall between herself and her family. Her inability to spare time for herself and her family upsets her life. Most of the solemn duties towards her husband and children are unattended to. The children do not get proper love and care from their mother as she is late in returning home. The husband sits waiting:

"I came home late that night… When I came home I found him sitting with a brooding expression on his face that made my heart give painful, quivering little jumps". (DHT: 78)

In ***That Long Silence***, Jaya is besieged with all sorts of advice, when she gets married, "Be good to Mohan, Jaya," (LS: 138) Dada had advised Jaya, when she was leaving Ambegaon. "A husband is like a sheltering tree" (LS: 137), is a maxim uttered by Vanitamami. Ramukaka had asked her to remember that the happiness of her husband and home depended entirely on her. But much later she realizes that pursuit of happiness is a meaningless, unending exercise, like a puppy chasing its tail.

Generally, a woman's identity is defined by others, in terms of her relationship with men, i.e., as a daughter, as a wife, as a mother, etc. She doesn't have an identity of her own. Even her name keeps on changing according to the wishes of others. In ***That Long Silence*** Jaya is known by two names: Jaya, meaning victory is the name given to her by her father at the time of her birth. On the day of their marriage Mohan renames her as Sushasini which means "Soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman" (LS:16). Both the names symbolize the

traits of her personality. The former symbolizes revolt and the latter submission.

Saru recalls three incidents related to her profession, which have completely ruined her marriage. The first one is her interview for a special issue on career women brought out by a woman's magazine. The interviewer's casual query put to Manu – "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?" (DHT:200) undermines Manu's confidence totally. His sense of insecurity begins when there is an explosion in the nearby factory revealing the fact to the neighbors that Saru is no ordinary housewife but an important doctor. Another incident that aggravates the situation is that a friend suggesting that a holiday tour would be possible if one had a doctor wife. Saru herself is aware of the importance society confers on the doctor in her.

> *"And now when we walked out of the room there were nods and smiles, murmered greetings and namastes. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored… I know that it was there it began… this terrible thing that has destroyed our marriage. I know this too… that the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband."* (DHT: 42)

The financial ascendance of Sarita, at the same time, renders Many impotent. With her responsibilities increasing outside of home, she recoils from Manu's lovemaking and he takes her rejection of sex as rejection of himself. The only way he can regain that potency and masculinity is through sexual assault upon Sarita, which for him becomes an assertion of his manhood leading to a sort of abnormality at night, as he is a cheerful normal human being, a loving husband during day, turning into a rapist at night.

"The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body. And above me, a face I could not recognize,"…"The face and body both moving away to become a familiar huddled shape by my side. The same face smiling at me the next morning, saying 'Morning, Saru. Slept well ?". (DHT:112)

Saru not able to take up all this feels stripped of her independence by

virtue of being assigned to the job of a housewife i.e. bringing up children and catering to the interest of her husband. Tired of both the duties, indoors and outdoors, she wants to leave the latter one : “Manu, I want to stop working, I want to give it all up : my practice, the hospital, everything”. (DHT:79) But Manu does not want her to leave her job as they cannot maintain the same standard with only his income: “On my salary? Come on, Saru, don’t be silly, you know how much I earn, you think we can live this way on that?” (DHT: 81). This burden of double duties is not only a feeling in itself but gradually takes on a force imbalancing the marital harmony.

Jaya’s husband Mohan always interprets things in relation to the effect it may have on the society. So he wants Jaya also to think like him and warns her not to indulge in anything that would endanger their marriage. Jaya, a representative of the typical Indian woman, wants to mould herself as her husband wills. Jaya has her first and the only outburst with Mohan soon after her marriage as she had been fresh from her “Jaya for victory” past. Mohan, steeped in the norms he had learnt in his own family, says to Jaya : “My mother never raised her voice against my father, however badly he behaved to her (DHT: 83). Also to Mohan anger made a woman “unwomanly”. So Jaya just withdraws under the shell of silence.

When Mohan is caught in an act of malpractice and is supposed to be unavailable for a certain period, he assumes Jaya would accompany him. Though she is unwilling to follow the examples of Sita and Savitri, she is compelled by situation and circumstances to follow suit.

“No, what have I to do with these mythical women? I can’t fool myself. The truth is simpler. Two bullocks yoked together… it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful; and what animal would voluntarily choose pain?” (LS :11-12).

Unable to confront her problem, Saru seeks a temporary refuge in delayed confrontation. She goes to her parent’s home where she says that she has come to escape the “professional role”. But it is actually to escape the role of being a wife. The brief stay away from Manu and the children gives her a good perspective and a change to review her past, her own psychology, her own place in relation to others in the family and the society around. With the self-realization comes the decision to confront the problems. She comes to know that she has been running away from dark carrying the light, puzzling over the problem, when like a musk deer the solution is within her.

She realizes that the problem lies as much “within” as outside. Earlier it was only Manu’s inadequacy that she saw, now she sees her own inadequacy

too – her inability to combine roles and be a source of love as a daughter, sister, wife and mother. She has arrived at some self-realization and life is no terror anymore. She decides to confront Manu. Nothing more, nothing less. She will no longer be the object Manu can take his frustrations on. Manu too has to face the reality of his own failure and his wife being a success. The doctor in Saru is much more important than the wife or mother in her. At the moment of utter despair it is the call of the profession that steadies her and gives her courage to confront reality. Sarus setting out to attend to Sunita's illness is significantly placed at the end of the novel. The steadied woman says, "Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back as soon as I can." In the very first part of the novel, Saru says, "as long as there is a patient before me, I feel real". She refers to the profession as a crutch, which speaks for its indispensability. The novel's ending with Saru setting out to attend to a patient indicates the assertion of her career.

At the flat in Dadar, begins Jaya's self-examination and self-criticism. She is flooded by the memories of the past – her earlier life, her marriage with Mohan, the frustrations and disappointments in her seventeen-year-old married existence, her personal failures, all these begin to torment her. Jaya reviews her relationship with Kamat, a lonely widower with whom she had been more free and uninhibited than with her husband. But when Jaya had found Kamat lying dead on the floor of his flat on one of her visits to him, she had just left the place in silence. She perhaps does the role of wife to a perfection, but fails as a human being due to the fear of ruining her marriage.

In her anxiety to fulfil her roles of a wife and a mother, Jaya had not done proper justice to her own talents. Years back Jaya had made a good beginning as a writer by producing a story which had won the first prize and was published in a magazine. Mohan had been hurt at the thought that the people of his acquaintance would think he was the husband portrayed in the story. Mohan had suggested that she should write light, humorous pieces in the newspapers, what they called "middles". She had then started her weekly column "Seeta" which had won the approval of the readers, the editor, and above all of her husband. "And for me", Jaya observes, "she had been the means through which I had shut the door, firmly, on all those other women who had invaded my being, screaming for attention, women I had known I could not write about, because they might – it was possible resemble Mohan's mother, or aunt, or my mother or aunt. Seeta was safer" (LS: 149) Thus the novelist makes it clear that not only patriarchy has kept silent on the subject of women, but under patriarchy, women, have also recoiled from telling the truth about their sex. She stops writing about serious problems and starts giving the familiar

excuses any woman gave, that they have no time for household duties. Kamat had reproved this tendency in her : “I’m warning you - beware of this ‘Women are the victims’ theory of yours. It’ll drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously, woman. Don’t skulk behind a false name. And work-work if you want others to take you seriously. (LS: 148).

Mohan leaves the house when Jaya hysterically laughs at him. His absence unnerves Jaya, and she thinks she would fall apart. Rahul (her son) who has been on a holiday trip with Rupa and Ashok (their family friends) disappears and re-appears. Later she receives a telegram from Mohan informing all is well which means the corruption case has been settled without any harm to him. When Jaya finally comes out of her emotional upheaval she has sorted out a few problems with herself. In the two nights she has to herself, she puts down on paper all that she had suppressed in her seventeen years silence. By penning her story, she has achieved articulation of her predicament, her constraints, her anguish and thereby breaks her silence. She journeys a full circle but it is not the same point to which she returns. The process of reflection makes her redefine her role and gives her an important insight. In Jaya own words, “I’m not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I’m Mohan’s wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of a fragmentation is not possible” (LS: 191). She decides not to look at his face for clues and then give “him the answer I know he wants” (LS: 192).

The epigraph of the novel ***The Dark Holds No Terrors*** emphasizes : “You are your own refuge ; there is no other refuge. This refuge is hard to achieve (The Dhammapada)”. We may say that Saru’s search for refuge has taken her to a different plane and she has made up her mind to redefine her role. She decides that integration alone would make her whole again. The strength of the novel is that, Saru is gifted with an objective perception – she is as critical of herself as others. ***The Dark Holds No Terrors*** effectively brings out the psychological problems of a career woman and makes clear to us that escapism is no permanent solution . Instead one should confront the problems and put an end to it.

Likewise what Jaya finds when she searches through her self is “the woman who had once lived here. Mohan’s wife. Rahul’s and Rati’s mother. Not myself” (LS: 69). Now she has belief in herself, she can choose. She had not spoken so far. She resolves that she will now be at the receiving end. She decides to fight back with knowledge. This decision fills her with vigour and buoyance and the novel ends in an affirmative note:

"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 I know now it is this : life has always to be made possible". (LS: 193)

According to Sarla Palkar the important insight that Shashi Despande imparts to us through Saru and Jaya is that "Women should accept their own responsibility for what they are, see how much they have contributed to their own victimization, instead of putting the blame on every body except themselves". It is only through self-analysis and self-understanding, through vigilance and courage, they can begin to change their lives. They will have to fight their own battles- nobody is going to do that for them. □

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Sd/- U.N. Majhi
Editor

The Domestic Façade of Liza Hamilton in Steinbeck's *East of Eden*

* Dr. K. Rajaraman

Even though Steinbeck cautioned his contemporary readers that the nation was not willing to accept a woman who completely rejected domesticity, he also sought to uncover that the postwar society had a false idea of femininity. Writing in a time in which conformity was admired, Steinbeck aimed to demonstrate that the lives of women, devoted to family and religion, were the products of social conformity. Whereas Cathy obtains her strength through her determination to defy the ordinary by refusing to be a conventional mother and wife and uses her intelligence to manipulate men, Liza Hamilton gains most of her strength through religion (Everest 17). While Liza is often considered to be one of Steinbeck's strongest female characters among all of his works, she has been neglected by critics. In contrast to Cathy and Abra, Liza is often overlooked in discussions of Steinbeck's female characters, even among discussions concentrating on East of Eden. In review of the female characters of East of Eden, Mimi Gladstein claims in "The Strong Female Principle of Good—or Evil: The Women of East of Eden," "When the mothers are there, they tend to be colorless, weak characters who fade into the background" (31). Shown as merely a domestic figure, Liza suffers from lack of a distinguishable personality. Juxtaposed to the character of Cathy, Liza spends the majority of her time and energy caring for her family as well as developing and perfecting her spirituality. While the absence of her personality makes her a somewhat invisible character, it is exactly this lack of individuality that makes Liza a product of conformity. In displaying her morally good character and her unfailing domesticity, Liza represents the ideal compliant and domesticated woman that was epitomized and considered a necessity in creating the "nuclear family" in the fifties. While Liza is a dedicated wife, mother, and Christian, her lack of affection makes her unlikeable: she seems to fulfill her duties only as mere performance in order to meet the expectations of society. Portraying Liza as lacking colorful characteristics, Steinbeck conveys that Liza is a façade, emphasizing that the domestic image in which the postwar generation epitomized is an unrealistic woman.

Liza's faith helps define her as the traditional, wholesome domestic. Liza is one of Steinbeck's morally strongest female characters, drawing her

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strength from her Christian faith. Unlike her questioning and philosophizing husband, Samuel Hamilton, Liza has no use for books. The one and only book she feels is worth reading and adhering to is the Bible: “In that one book she had her history and her poetry, her knowledge of people and things, her ethics, her morals, and her salvation” (Steinbeck, Eden 43). For Liza, her religion becomes the most important influence on her life, even surpassing the importance of her family: “Her total intellectual association was the Bible, except the talk of Samuel and her children, and to them she did not listen” (43). Though at one level it appears that Liza does care for her husband and children, she is willing to neglect them if they interfere with her living according to her interpretation of the Bible. Along with following the teachings of the Bible without questioning them, Liza is depicted as a harsh and severe woman who despises idleness and sees laughter as the devil’s work.

On the surface, Liza’s religious aspirations make her fulfill the wholesome requirements of the domestic. She is also portrayed as a devoted wife and mother who willingly assumes all of the familial duties often associated with a traditional homemaker. Although she is described as being extremely petite, Liza bears eight children and raises them with her husband on their farm outside of Salinas: “Bearing her children did not hold her back very much—two weeks at the most she had to be careful. She must have had a pelvic arch of whalebone, for she had big children one after the other” (11). In order to exemplify her strength, Steinbeck avoids depicting Liza as a helpless, frail woman, even during her pregnancies.

Along with drawing her strength from religion, Liza has the ability to gain power, much like Cathy, through her wisdom. Although Liza never becomes well-acquainted with Cathy, she intuitively knows that Cathy is not a honorable person. Once Samuel returns from visiting Adam and Cathy Trask for the first time, Liza asks Samuel what Cathy was doing with her hands while she sat on the porch. Liza is dumbfounded that Cathy failed to be making any use of her hands such as sewing, mending, or knitting throughout Samuel’s visit. Despite Samuel’s description of Cathy as being young, pretty and quiet, as Beth Everest claims, “Liza distinctively knows that Cathy’s appearance is deceptive, mainly because Cathy does nothing with her hands” (19). In Liza’s opinion, idleness is the ‘devil’s tool’ and if Cathy were going to be a fit mother, she would be preparing for the arrival of her baby by knitting or sewing rather than sitting at leisure (Steinbeck, Eden 182). At Samuel’s request, Liza visits the Trask household to care for the twins soon after they are born. Once she returns home, she admits to Samuel, “‘I can find no real fault with her save

perhaps a touch of laziness, and yet I don't like her very much'" (199). Though Liza is not able to justify her dislike and distrust of Cathy, she intuitively knows that Cathy is not a decent person. Despite her short visit with the Trasks, Liza even recognizes that Cathy has practically "put a spell on her husband" (199). Though she cannot identify the cause, Liza, who can see individuals for who they truly are, is aware that Cathy's relationship with her husband and sons is not normal in the traditional sense and that Adam's judgment is dangerously impaired by his false vision of Cathy.

Liza's knowledge of people is not limited to the Trasks. She has a great understanding of her husband's nature as well. Although the Hamiltons live on a farm, Samuel is much more of a dreamer and an inventor than a farmer. After visiting Adam's extremely dry farm, Samuel agrees to build a watering system for him. Knowing that Samuel enjoys doing the work and is not concerned whether he gets paid or not for his labor, Liza warns Samuel, "'It's my experience, Samuel, and should be yours, that if they don't pay presently they never pay at all. We could buy a valley farm with your promises'" (182). Even though it is Samuel's responsibility to be the provider for his family, it is Liza who has the business sense. As Sandra Beatty contends in "A Study of Female Characterization in Steinbeck's Fiction," "In the case of Liza Hamilton, it is her complete realism, her practicality, efficiency, and unshakable convictions as opposed to Samuel's dreaming, his carefree and almost child-like idealism, which keep the Hamilton family from starving" (4). Being much more rational than Samuel, Liza must constantly prevent Samuel from following through with his unfeasible dreaming, and remind him of the importance of maintaining an income to ensure the care of their children and home.

Besides being aware of Samuel's impracticality, Liza also understands that Samuel has an overly kind and passive demeanor. Once Samuel hears that Adam's twin sons are still not named after they are a year old, he tells Liza that he must visit the Trask farm and help Adam name the boys. From the horror of finding out the Trask boys are so neglected by their father that they do not even have names yet, Liza commands Samuel, "'If you do not get those boys named, there'll be no warm place in this house for you'" (Steinbeck, Eden 256). Although Samuel swears to Liza that he will convince Adam to name the boys, even if he has to use physical force, Liza knows that Samuel often fails to be assertive in confrontation: "'You fall short in savagery, Samuel. I know you. You'll give him sweet-sounding words and you'll come dragging back and try to make me forget you ever went'" (256). While it appears that Liza lacks faith in Samuel getting the boys named, Everest argues that actually "her instruc-

tions to Samuel on the naming of the twins demonstrate her thorough, practical wisdom" (19). In order to prove Liza wrong, Samuel leaves for the Trask farm with a head-strong determination, and Liza's cleverness ultimately results in the naming of the boys. By narrating the conflicts between Liza and Samuel, Beatty reasons that "Steinbeck is of the opinion, then, that it is these basic differences between man and woman which not only create the need in man for a woman but also determine […] the specific nature of the role which the woman takes on" (4). Through Liza's practicality and perseverance, Steinbeck stresses the importance women have on society as a whole.

Even though Liza is portrayed as being a conventional homemaker in the sense that she does the majority of the cooking, cleaning, and sewing for her husband and children, her uncompromising devotion to her faith and her household responsibilities prohibit her from being the typical loving wife and maternal figure. Though she and Samuel have eight children, Liza is never presented as being a sexual woman. Unlike Cathy and Abra who embrace their sexuality, Steinbeck never illustrates a scene between Samuel and Liza in which they show affection toward one another. The lack of physical affection between Samuel and Liza insinuates that they participate in sexual intercourse merely as a means of procreation. Even Liza's physical description depicts her as being stern and callous rather than loving: "She wore her hair always pulled tight back and bunned behind in a hard knot. […] She had no spark of humor and only occasionally a blade of cutting wit" (Steinbeck, Eden 11). As a result of her lack of womanly kindness, "There was a nail-hard strength in her, a lack of any compromise, a rightness in the face of all opposing wrongness, which made you hold her in a kind of awe but not in warmth" (43). Despite the fact that Liza is admired for her unwavering strength and commitment to living a faultless Christian lifestyle, her determination hinders her from having a loving and kind relationship with her family. In fact, her strong will even "frighten[s] her grandchildren because she ha[s] no weakness" (12). With Liza's lack of motherly and wifely kindness, Steinbeck undermines the maternal qualities of love and tenderness often connected with motherhood and demonstrates that the domestic image is not a realistic or desirable figure.

Liza is much more domestic than maternal when she visits Adam and Cathy Trask shortly after the Trask twins are born. As a result of Cathy's neglect of the housework and the caring of the twin boys, Liza "cleaned the Trask house from the top clear down into the grain of the wooden floors. […] She put the babies on a working basis and noted with satisfaction that they howled most of the time and began to gain weight" (198-199). Rather than being truly

concerned for the welfare of Cathy and the babies and attempting to become emotionally engaged with them during her week-long stay, Liza undertakes her task at the Trask house as if it is just another duty she must complete. She cleans the house and organizes a daily schedule for the caring of the babies in a mechanical fashion. Once the Trask house is in order and the babies are healthy, she returns to her own home and, rather than spending time and socializing with her family, immediately gets to work: "She found her house a stable of filth and abomination and she set to cleaning it with the violence and disgust of a Hercules at labor" (199). Liza's drive to keep order among the house interferes with her ability to be a loving and compassionate woman.

Liza's lack of compassion is essentially demonstrated through her reactions, or rather lack thereof, to the loss of her loved ones. Unlike Samuel, who is struck "like a silent earthquake" when his and Liza's daughter, Una, dies, Liza's strength is not breached: "Liza with her acceptance could take care of tragedy; she had no real hope this side of Heaven" (276). Liza's acceptance of tragedy and her lack of reaction toward her daughter's untimely death reveal her cold character. Even after Samuel's death, it is Liza who assumes the responsibility of making sure over a hundred people are fed after his funeral. In response to Adam's disbelief of Liza's actions so soon after Samuel's death, Will replies, "'She's practical. She knew they had to be fed and she fed them'" (329).

Instead of grieving normally as expected of a widow, Liza does not reveal the slightest bit of pain from her loss and continues her domestic duties as if it were any other day, resulting in her having a mechanical appearance. Rather than making her seem righteous, Liza's practicality and lack of emotion in response to both Samuel's and Una's death make her appear to be both callous and unloving. Although she is a much more ethical person than Cathy, Liza's lack of compassion causes her to be an unlikable woman. While as readers we are drawn to have sympathy for Cathy in her confining circumstances and question why she acts wickedly, Steinbeck does not convince us to feel empathy for Liza and to understand the motives for her actions. By characterizing Liza as an unlikable woman, Steinbeck conveys that the domestic women of the time in which he was writing have little emotional depth and that the ideal domesticated woman of the nineteen fifties is not a desirable woman at all.

In fact, Liza's unbending dedication to her faith as well as her familial responsibilities proves to be more harmful than beneficial. In reference to the females in **East of Eden**, Lorelei Cederstrom writes, "the feminine is almost totally repressed, irrelevant to the structured roles and relationships in the Christian lives of the settlers, but irrupting dangerously as a result of that

repression" (200). As a result of striving to fulfill her religious and domestic duties, Liza's femininity is stifled; thus causing her determination and strength to resist repression. Over the course of their marriage, Liza's will power is so overbearing that it emasculates Samuel. Liza does not approve of Samuel's friendship to Adam because she feels that Adam's situation only saddens Samuel and leaves him with a feeling of depression. Although Samuel knows he must visit Adam to help him and the twins, "it gave him a sad feeling in the stomach to think of disobeying his wife. He explained his purpose almost as though he were confessing" (Steinbeck, Eden 255). Even though Samuel only has good intentions of helping his neighbor, he does not want to disappoint his wife. Liza's self-righteousness causes her to become, for Samuel, a god-like figure whom he fears and must confess his disobedience to. Whereas Liza does not wish for Samuel to disobey her, she also ridicules him when he is compliant: "'Don't agree with me all the time. It hints of insincerity. Speak up for yourself'" (257). Though Liza claims that she wants Samuel to be assertive, she fails to give him the chance. Her aggressive behavior and stern attitude cause her to be the masculine figure, ultimately stripping Samuel of his power and emasculating him.

Although Liza's good morals and great strength make her a pious character, her lack of tenderness causes her to be a masculine figure rather than feminine. Through this characterization of Liza, "Steinbeck presents his readers with a formidable wife, but he moves beyond the stereotype to present a very human and not always likable woman" (Everest 20). By depicting Liza to be such a cold and stern wife and mother, Steinbeck is warning his readers that although it is admirable for women to be both physically strong and strong in faith, they must not allow their strength to cause the renunciation of their maternal qualities. Being published in a time when the majority of women were struggling with gaining independence and fighting the pressures of society to conform, **East of Eden**'s Liza poses a warning for American society. While American culture urged women to be pure, wholesome, and domestic, Liza represents a woman who has taken her domestic and religious duties too far, and lacks the qualities of warmth and sexuality that often make women attractive. While Steinbeck draws us to have sympathy for Cathy in her confining circumstances and to analyze why she acts wickedly, we are not persuaded to feel empathy for Liza. Before the novel ends, "Liza Hamilton die[s] with a pinched little smile on her mouth, and her cheekbones [are] shockingly high when the red [is] gone from them" (Steinbeck, Eden 490). Liza's 'pinched little smile' and high cheekbones after her death bear witness to her smugness and pride, as well as her forced smile. Though she fulfills the household responsi-

bilities expected of her, her obvious lack of affection toward her family proves that she performs the domestic acts only out of a sense of duty.

In contrast to Cathy—who illustrates the ability to change from a negligent mother who abandons her sons to a somewhat caring, mother-like figure for Aron— Liza remains a constant, unyielding figure of piety. Liza's flat characterization represents the limitations of American women of the nineteen fifties and their lack of growth in similar situations. Through his account of Liza's death, Steinbeck shows that this type of female figure is a false ideal. In the depictions of Cathy and Liza then, **East of Eden** reveals the flaws of both ruthless and sexual women and of women who display piety and conformity. While on the surface Liza exemplifies positive qualities of duty and piety, Steinbeck very artfully presents her as a negative example, as he explores and discusses the repression of women, as well as their search for identity and meaning in the postwar era. ☐

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Portrayal of Black Middle Class in Nella Larsen's *Passing*

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Passing explores the psychological and social costs of racial passing on two women, Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry. Although Irene does not, except on occasions when it is convenient, pass as white, Clare's passing and subsequent decision to reenter parts of the black experience through her friendship with Irene disrupt the life-style Irene has fought so hard to maintain, doing so with tragic consequences for both women.

Larsen pays special attention to the emotional bonds that connect the two women. The opening chapter begins with Irene musing over a letter she receives from Clare. Irene's emotional state is made obvious in her reflection on what the letter's contents might mean. She focuses on the letter's more personal message. Clare writes about how lonely she is and how she must see Irene, as though Irene is the only person in the world who might alleviate her loneliness.

The next chapter of the novel emphasizes the emotional connection between the two women. It depicts their meeting two years previously. They had not seen each other since they were teenagers. Irene has temporarily decided to pass because it is hot and humid in Chicago, where she is visiting her father and shopping for her two sons. She has tea at the top of the Drayton Hotel and meets Clare. At first, Irene is simply fascinated with the woman's beauty and is curious as to why the woman keeps staring at her. Her first thought is that the woman might suspect that she is passing. Before long, the bold Clare makes her identity known. The women begin discussing old times and, briefly, new ones. During tea, Irene notes the rage she feels toward Clare, who has done the despicable in denying her race, but she also notes Clare's beauty, thinking of Clare as a lovely creature. Clare wants Irene to come to her house for tea, and although Irene knows that she should not do it, because Clare's husband is white, she agrees, almost as if compelled.

Two years later, Irene is in the same predicament. Clare has requested another meeting, and in spite of knowing that she should not meet with her, Irene agrees. She knows that more is at risk this time because Clare, being

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in New York City, is on Irene's turf. Anything outrageous or scandalous that happens will have immediate consequences on Irene's life.

Irene and Clare meet. Clare tells Irene of her plan to spend time with black people, to become reacquainted with the black experience. Against her better judgment, Irene agrees to help Clare in her plan. The novel next showcases a number of parties, racial uplift meetings, and dinners that the two women attend in Harlem.

Most people are charmed with Clare, and everything seems to be working fine until Clare's visits to the Redfield home become more frequent. Irene notes the attraction Brian has for Clare. Added to Irene's growing jealousy is the complication of Clare's husband, who returns from a business trip. His presence makes Clare's getting away to be among black people more difficult and dangerous.

The novel is divided into three major sections, entitled "Encounter," "Re-Encounter," and "Finale." Larsen advances her story by detailing Irene's responses to the changes in her life that Clare's "newfound" blackness brings. At various times, Irene either hates or loves Clare, feels sorry for her or feels contempt, and wants Clare near her or banished to another part of the world. It becomes clear to Irene that Clare's attention to Brian may be all he needs to make a decision to leave Harlem, costing Irene the material and social comfort she has worked hard to get. Irene resolves that Clare must leave her life. Irene often hopes that something will happen to remove Clare from the Redfields' social circle.

The novel's ending, which includes Clare's death, is ambiguous. Irene wanted Clare out of her life, but the narrative does not make it clear if Clare accidentally fell from an apartment window, jumped, or was pushed by John Bellew or by Irene. In any event, Irene is relieved that Clare is dead.

Larsen uses a third-person omniscient narrator who is always close to Irene Redfield's thoughts and feelings. Most of the novel's meaning depends on Irene's character. Irene, Clare, and Brian are the most fully realized of the characters, though several relatively undeveloped characters are present, including Gertrude Martin, John Bellew, Zulena, Hugh Wentworth, and Felise Freeland.

Irene is a complicated character whose exterior conventionality masks a woman who wants adventure and excitement and whose reinvolvement with Clare gives her vicarious outlets for feelings she has denied. Irene is an inauthentic woman. By disclosing her thoughts, feelings, and life choices,

Larsen highlights not only the extent of this inauthenticity but also how it creates a woman more dangerous in her denial of self than Clare is in her overt risk-taking.

Irene has groomed herself to be a model of black middle-class respectability. She marries a physician, has two sons, lives in a respectable Harlem brownstone, associates with the right people, and supports the right social causes, such as the Negro Welfare League. On the surface, she has it all. Beneath the surface, Larsen shows the price Irene pays to live a fraudulent life.

When Irene reflects on her relationship with Brian and the constant tension she has to quell to keep him from moving to Brazil and disrupting her life, she understands that she does not love him and never has. She thinks that if he were to die, she would only look askance at his photograph. She and Brian even sleep in separate bedrooms. She remains in her marriage for the financial security and social standing it provides. When Clare poses a risk to her security, Irene decides to do something about it. Most of her activity is relegated to an ever-increasing series of thoughts, first centering on how nice it would be if Clare disappeared from their circle of friends and then proceeding to visions of Clare's death.

Irene is also inauthentic in her role of mother. She makes sure that her sons are dressed, are fed well, and are doing their homework, but she takes no real interest in their lives other than wanting them not to be hurt by racism. She will not discuss racism or human sexuality with them because she thinks that if these topics are not discussed, then they do not exist.

In other words, Irene "passes" as a wife and mother. Both guises make her angry and irritable just beneath the surface. Another Irene lurks deeper inside, one craving the very danger she objects to in Clare's life. Larsen presents this part of Irene's character through a detailing of Irene's oscillating thoughts and feelings about Clare. In her thoughts, Irene often hates Clare, seeing her as a despicable black woman and mother, but in her actions she always lets Clare have her way, at least until the final pages of the novel. Psychologically, Irene is fascinated with Clare, with her vitality, her risk-taking, her doing what she wants to do. Irene is always preoccupied with Clare.

Clare Kendry is not so preoccupied with Irene. From the beginning of the novel, Clare is presented as someone who has always taken risks to get what she wants. Her decision to pass and then to marry a white man is her most significant risk, for she can have no control over the color of any children she might have. When she meets Irene in Chicago and invites Irene and Gertrude

to meet her husband, John, she is again taking risks. He might suspect not only that her friends are black but also that she is too. Reentering the black experience through Irene's contacts is yet one more risk Clare takes. Her risks are taken with little thought as to how negative consequences might affect others, for example her child and her black friends. In this sense, Clare is willful, selfish, and daring. More important, unlike Irene, Clare makes the choices to live as she wants to, not as others might expect her to. Her decision to rejoin black people is not presented in any noble way. She does not seem to want to reidentify with black people. Her intention is to have experiences that satisfy her. The price for her choices is her death.

Passing develops many issues that converge on the novel's larger theme of the consequences and nuances of racial passing in the 1920's. Larsen extends her understanding of passing to more than its obvious racial considerations. In her extended coverage of the phenomenon of passing, her focus is on those who do not live authentically. To Larsen, living inauthentically is a human tragedy. This idea is advanced most directly in her scrutiny of the Redfields, particularly Irene.

Larsen critiques racial passing from the position that racial uniqueness, which in the United States includes a historical and cultural African American tradition, is not something that one should dismiss. Even as she details Clare's reasons for passing, which include economic and social opportunity and sometimes peace of mind, Larsen suggests that these do not take the place of one's racial culture. Clare's reasons for wanting to reenter the black experience make the point. In spite of the wealth and leisure she has in her marriage to John Bellew, Clare misses her people. Although she is not always sincere in her determination to be a part of black people's lives, Clare is sincere when she tells Irene how much she misses black people.

The price individuals pay when they choose to pass racially is high. Many remain trapped in their new white world, forever geographically and socially separated from their people, but always spiritually connected in some way. If, as in Clare's case, they choose to return to their people, dire consequences threaten, as evinced by John Bellew's reaction to the knowledge that Clare is black and more poignantly by Clare's mysterious death.

Larsen's critique of the other kinds of passing is no less severe. In her close attention to Irene's psychology, Larsen emphasizes that living inauthentically by adhering to cultural scripts of conventionality and material possession, even within one's race, is dangerous and damaging to the human spirit. Irene is a shell of a woman. She is intelligent and creative, but those traits are wasted

in maintaining a marriage to a husband she does not love. She persists in the marriage only because she wants the upper-class life-style that it affords.

Wanting to believe that Clare's intrusion into her life is a threat to her marriage, Irene does all she can to destroy a friendship that provides her only real living. Irene's change from doing whatever Clare says to finding ways to sever their friendship accompanies her recognition that her marriage to Brian, indeed her entire adult life, is a fraud. Rather than accept this growing understanding, Irene denies it. She thinks that if only Clare were out of the way, all else would return to normal.

At the novel's end, Larsen makes it clear that Irene's relief at Clare's death is temporary. At Clare's death, Irene is faced with the knowledge that her life is empty. Her passing, like Clare's passing, has come to naught.

Larsen's ***Passing***, like her first and more ambitious novel *Quicksand* (1928), explores black middle-class milieus and the lack of choices and alternatives available to women who are a part of them. Although on a surface reading the women in ***Passing*** appear to have choices, a closer scrutiny of the text suggests that they have few real options available to them. For those such as Clare who chose to pass, a white middle-class life-style, with its restrictions on possibilities for women, is offered. For women such as Irene, the same choices are present, only couched within middle-class respectability. In ***Quicksand***, Helga Crane, the protagonist, travels across the United States and then to Europe in search of a place where she can live an authentic life. She spends much time complaining about the limited choices available to black middle-class women. For many of them, being respectable and good, which often means marrying a professional black man and having his children, are the only acceptable roles. In both novels, Larsen demonstrates the toll such limited choices take on her protagonists, who are both psychologically defeated.

Larsen's novels, furthermore, examine black middle-class women's lives from a different and more aesthetically challenging position than those of her contemporary, Jessie Fauset. Fauset usually had her protagonists not only acquiesce to marriage but also enjoy the subservience of it. Larsen's novels, when compared to Fauset's, present a more in-depth treatment of black middle-class subject matter.

Larsen's novels look forward to a time when black female writers would be able to explore a wider range of subject matter and include even more options for black female characters. Deborah E. McDowell, for example, in the introduction to the 1986 America Women Writers reissue of ***Quicksand*** and ***Passing***, suggests that Larsen proposed the alternative of lesbian sexual

expression in her creation of the friendship of Irene and Clare. Black women writers of the 1980's and 1990's have freedom that Larsen did not have in creating character, subject matter, and theme.

With two slim novels and a short story as a record of her creative production, Nella Larsen is considered by most critics of African American literature to be of seminal importance in presenting the black female character's way of viewing the world in the 1920's. Such acclaim began appearing in the late 1970's, when black feminist critics looked at Larsen's work anew and resurrected it from a critical tradition that had denied it any authority. □

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Post Colonial Preoccupations and Cultural Hybridity in David Malouf's ***Remembering Babylon***

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David Malouf was born in Brisbane in 1934. He was educated at Brisbane Grammar School and the University of Queensland. He lived in Europe 1959-68, and worked as a relief teacher in London before taking up a permanent teaching position at Birkenhead. He also taught English at the University of Sidney 1968-77 and later he devoted himself to full-time writing. Well known as a poet, Malouf has published the volumes of work of poetry *Bicycle and Other Poems* (1970), *Neighbours in a Thicket* (1974), *Wild Lemons* (1980) and *First Things Last* (1980). He has also written the novels *Johnno* (1975), *An Imaginary Life* (1978), *Harland's Half Acre* (1984), *The Great World* (1990) and *Remembering Babylon* (1993).

The novel *Remembering Babylon* takes place in the mid 19th century in a remote settlement of Queensland, Australia. One day while a group of children playing at the edge of the village, a remarkable figure stumbles out of the bush. This dark, unkempt person (Gemmy) turns out to be a white man who had fallen from a ship 16 years back (when he was a 19 year old sailor), and thereafter he has been living with an aboriginal tribe in the new land ever since. He hardly remembers English language and his inherent culture because the present sensibility that he has acquired from the aborigines. Gemmy is, in fact, a victim of colonialism as he has already lost his real identity, and the present identity is a borrowed one that often keeps him away from the aborigines' community because he fails to adopt the entire prevailing practices of aborigines. When he is put at gun point he shouts "Do not shoot, I am a B-b British object" (5). Here in this novel, Malouf invokes the reverse impact of colonialism. For the first time an English man is represented as becoming the victim of colonialism of his own blood.

Gemmy is, however, a quintessence of a man with dual personality who represents the conflict between cultural and physical belonging in the new land. He is in fact a product of two cultures but he is not able to attain a permanent identity from both. Through the portrayal of Gemmy, Malouf discloses the fact that it is impossible to bridge a fine balance between the settlers and aborigines.

Gemmy's act of crossing the boundary signifies a symbolic meaning that he has the prerogative to cross the man made boundaries with his double identity. His recent encounters with the settlers invoke the reminiscences of the life he has lost springs out to return to him. The present experience with the settlers helps him to relearn some words of the language that he has almost lost. Malouf says:

> *If he could get the words inside him, as he had soaked mush, the creature, or spirit or whatever it was, would come up to the surface of him and take them. It was the words he had to get hold of. It was the words that would recognize get hold of. He did not want to be taken back. What he wanted was to be recognized. (32)*

As a child, Gemmy starts learning his lost language again; he tries to mingle with the white children there to evoke his hidden self and his mother tongue. At first Gemmy crafts a sensation in the settlement and attempts to catch the sympathy of white people so that they may wish to help him, despite his obvious savage mentality. He goes to live with the McIvor family, whose daughter, Janet, and nephew, Lachlan Beattie, are among the children who found him in the beginning. While Mrs. McIvor accepts Gemmy with Christian love, her husband Jock remains skeptical. Gemmy also edifies the children some of the skills he has pursued from the aborigines. Gemmy becomes very close to Lachlan who always endeavours to establish his dominance over Gemmy despite being a child. Being a child, Lachlan's attempt to dominate Gemmy signifies his inborn nature of a typical white colonizer wishing to control over the others.

In fact, it soon becomes clear that there are major tensions in the village regarding Gemmy's presence among them. Most of the settlers suspect that Gemmy must be the spy of aborigines. Soon Gemmy has become the symbol of fear to many settlers because they feel a kind of tension in keeping Gemmy among them. Among the European settlers, there are two views of handling the aborigines — one group believes that the blacks should simply be wiped out and every one of them should be terminated because they are semi-barbarians, worthless and could not possibly become Christians. A second group has a more romantic view. They are of the view that the natives could be tamed so as to be used their servants. They envision themselves as owners of large plantations in the new land.

Representatives of both groups try to win Gemmy's confidence and obtain information; the whites wish to know the whereabouts and plans of the aborigines whereas the aborigines want to get hold the secrecies of whites.

He, however, remains silent about these matters, although being pleasant and differential toward everyone. An uneasy truce holds until one day two aboriginal people are observed while visiting Gemmy on MacIvor's property. This creates an uproar, which eventually leads even some of the God-fearing whites to commit acts of vandalism to injure Gemmy. The horror that the whites often correlate with the aborigines seems to have fallen on Gemmy and they fear him too. One of them says to Gemmy:

> *It brought you slap up against a terror you thought you had learned, years back, to treat as childish: the Bogey, the Coal man, Absolute Night, and now here it is, not two yards away, solid and breathing…. (42)*

To preserve the peace, the McIvors send Gemmy to live with Mrs. Hutchence, an eccentric woman who lives on the margin of the settlement. However, he soon disappears into the wilderness. At the end of *Remembering Babylon*, fifty years after Gemmy disappeared, Janet McIvor, now a nun and beekeeper in a convent, looks back on her life and sees the importance of change in her life. Gemmy's violent death also brings changes into her life. Her hobby as a beekeeper gives her immense solace. She metaphorically conveys the meaning that being a benevolent nun her attempts are to form a one hive in the new land for all beings beyond racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination.

In *Remembering Babylon*, David Malouf goes back to the time of colonization to recreate a captivity narrative that reflects issues of identity, cultural difference, discrimination and colonialism. As a victim of colonization Gemmy has become both — white man's fear and burden — at once. Once Victor Hugo rightly said about colonialism as "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; the man for whom each country is as his native soil is already strong; but only the man for whom the whole world is as a foreign land is perfect". In this novel Malouf imaginatively forms a scenario of rural contact, of a coming together of two worlds and explores the impact of the two cultures over each other. Gemmy Fairley is a cultural hybrid, a white man gone 'native' having internalized aboriginal values.

Hybridity refers to the formation of a new 'transcultural' forms within the barrier produced by colonization. The term refers to the cross-breeding of two species to form a third hybrid species. Hybridization has multifaceted forms; linguistic, political, rural, etc. It is the in between space that carries the burden and meaning of culture. Hybridity signifies cross-cultural exchange. The term 'going-native' indicates the colonizer's fear of contamination by absorption into

nature, life and customs. It encompasses lapses from European behaviour, the participation in native ceremonies or the adoption and even enjoyment of local customs in terms of dress, food, recreation and entertainment. Hybridity is an encounter between the West and other. Hybridity results in impurity, intermingling, and the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies and songs.

In *Remembering Babylon*, the moment when Gemmy perches on the top rail of the fence, shouting "Do not shoot, I am a B-b British object" (5) forms the seed of the work. These words uttered by Gemmy are illustrative of subservient role he has always had to play in the interests of self-preservation and substance whereby his subjectivity is elided. His subjectivity generated within the pre-colonial discourse of the aboriginal, now enters the ambivalent marginal space between cultures. He is a quintessence of a displaced soul who gets transformed his position from subject into object. The fence on the edges of the empire on which Gemmy perches is symbolic not only of the separation of the civilized and the primitive, but is also a border between two different cultural discourses. The moment when Gemmy sits on the fence establishes him in the role that he occupies throughout as an 'in-between figure' on the fence dividing two cultures.

For the aborigines, Gemmy's story begins when they find an inherent crab-encrusted creature on the shore. He had been a "British Object" until British seamen heaved him overboard near the Australian coast in the mid 1840s. Gradually Gemmy finds his way into the aboriginal world, but even there he finds non complete recognition. With the passage of time, Gemmy's coming among them becomes another tale, the accounts of which Gemmy believes while his past life passes into oblivion along with his mother-tongue. Gemmy feels a growing urge to reclaim his past life which is what compels him to enter the white settlers' garrison world. Gemmy is really an intruder into the aborigines' community as well as into the white's community in Australia. The moment he enters white's culture, a discourse from which he has long been excluded, he finds his old language (that his new aboriginal language had replaced) coming back to him. To the whites Gemmy had stepped out of an unknown land.

The whites offer Gemmy clues to his first memories of Willet, Mosey and the Irish and the children among whom he once swarmed in English sawmill, cleaning nuts and bolts, and eating crusted machine oil as if it were candy. In his life at London, he had been Willet's boy, always at the receiving end of his master's curses. Gemmy is constantly haunted by memories of his past life, while the McIvors cherish pleasant memories of their life in Scotland.

Gemmy, however, yearns for recognition among the whites of the settlement, yet not wishing to be taken back into their midst. In a colonial power structure, the hybrid is always the 'other'. Thus, the hybrid is doomed to remain a fractured, chambered self forever, caught in alterity. Gemmy returns to the natives, denying the whiteness in him for which he would never attain recognition. The colonist's acts of barbarism drive Gemmy out of the settlement in the absence of which he would have always remained a 'white-black' hybrid. Gemmy's going back to the land, which was his mother where the aborigines inhabit, is the first step he takes towards negating his in-betweenness, totally merging with the aboriginal ethos. But Gemmy remains a hybrid in the eyes of those children who first saw him. Malouf's text offers hybridity or 'positive contamination' as a visible identity in its valorization of the positive influence Gemmy yields on some of the settlers.

Gemmy's return to the wilderness is indicative of his acceptance of his 'otherness' and a triumph of the discourse of colonialism. Through the persona of Gemmy, the suppressed pre-colonial native culture makes its appearance in a colonizer settlement. Gemmy, the colonial hybrid tends to look upon the colonizer as his model. He mimics the white man as he needs to be recognized. But this 'colonial mimicry' gets him nowhere and he remains a half-breed, a cultural amphibian. *Remembering Babylon* also portrays a cultural chasm rather than a cultural clash. Gemmy imbued with the mysticism and earth-centeredness of the native Australians with whom he has spent 16 years is no longer 'white'. Gemmy cannot identify with the European culture that was once his by heritage. No wonder he can hardly remember how to speak the English language.

The Europeans, secure in their conviction that the aboriginal people are sub-human savages, cannot even consider treating them as persons. Some of the settlers want to eliminate the blacks completely, while others would prefer simply to rule them. Gemmy slowly comes to the realization that to save himself and he must return to his aboriginal "roots". Ironically, this escape does not work an epilogue to the story implies that Gemmy comes to a bad end.

Viewed from a post-colonial perspective, *Remembering Babylon* is a pessimistic assessment of the colonial project, a lament for the missed opportunities which a meeting of disparate cultures could provide for humanity. Gemmy's double personality can make a cultural harmony between the aborigines and the whites. But neither the aborigines nor the whites accept

Gemmy's identity. Hence it has led to a breakdown of cultural harmony. Thus, the novel can be regarded as participating in the struggle between settler culture and First Nation's people. □

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Reawakened Identity of Women as Depicted in Shashi Deshpande's ***The Dark Holds No Terrors*** and ***The Binding Vine***

* *S. Ponmalar*

Standing still I searched,
Stretching out my arms,
Sinking deep into the earth,
Like the banyan roots,
Seeking the spring of life. (BV 151) - Shashi Deshpande

Shashi Deshpande presents human feelings which have been forgotten or erased from the pages of human history. She seeks to present life of women who remain anonymous in the society. Deshpande is tuned the voices that lay behind the silences. She is concerned about the issues and troubles of middleclass women, educated or uneducated. She lends her voice for the suffering, struggles, fears and unanswered questions. This is the magic in her

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writing which makes readers feel closed to the experiences that projected in her writings. Her voice seems to be the voice of the woman who looks at the world through her own eyes trying to create a consciousness that is yet unknown to people living main stream lives. Deshpande stated in an interview that "the serialization and search for one's own refuge is the sole aim of growing as a person".

Deshpande's novels usually begin with an unconventional marriage leading to the problems of alienation, accommodation and adjustment. Her attitude to her character is compassionate and sympathetic. The conflict that her protagonists face is largely due to desperate unconscious submission to traditional roles. When the men in the life of the protagonists began to pull up the very roots of their existence, they rose in defiance them and found a way of the own, rejecting all over-riding influences.

Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Binding Vine* portray the movement of the Deshpande heroines from their sheltered parental home to the outside world, through education and marriage. This exhibits the journey to the knowledge of the self. Both the novels start with a crisis which is recurrent theme in Deshpande novels. But the women march from diffidence to confidence.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita who is referred as Saru is portrayed as a well educated, economically independent women who searches for identity in society. The novel depicts a realistic picture of woman in modern Indian society. Though modern styles have been adopted, the psychology progress is remains oriented towards tradition. The problem with Saru was that though she had acquired high level education and had adopted outward modes and styles of living, her psychology had remained tradition bound. Saru gained the ability to see the realities of life after she starts to analyse her life.

In *The Binding Vine*, Urmila, the protagonist often referred as Urmi is a lecturer who represents middle class professional women living in Bombay. She also never had an unhappy childhood brought up in grand father's home. She longs for the affection of parents but later made her this lead an independent life. Urmi was already leading an economically and socially secure life even without her husband. But she was haunted with the confusion in her whether to take up the path of submission or rejection because both would end in discontentment. Both the heroines suffered in their childhood which made them rebellious.

The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande suffered in understanding the

concept of marriage. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru married Manohar against the wishes of her parents. She felt Manu would rescue her from her insecurity and isolation, but Manu failed to fulfill her wishes. Manu's complacency about the 'lady doctor' image of his wife spoilt their marriage. He felt insecure with the economic independence and reputation of Saru and it is Manu's ego that crumbles their relationship. Saru returned to her parental home and the separation provided Saru and Manu an opportunity to analyse their relationship.

In *The Binding Vine*, Urmi married Kishore, her childhood friend against her parent's wishes. She too struggled as Saru in her relationship with her husband. The lack of communication, the incompatibility to understand each other led to alienation. Both Saru and Urmi's married life existed as a name sake relationship or a mere live in relationship.

Manu, the husband of Saru felt insecure with the reputation of his wife. Kishore, the husband of Urmi maintained a distance from his wife due to lack of understanding. Though Saru, as well as Urmi realized their faults, they hesitated to give in because of 'pride'. Their economic independence made them to submit before their husbands. Towards the end, they realized their mistakes. Life was more important than doctrines. They asserted themselves for the sake of their children and family. Simultaneously, Deshpande shows the changes of their husbands who realized the value of their wives as wife, a mother also as a human being. This gradual change in both husband and wife reviewed their mutual understand each as well as their self-realization.

Marriage which was a spiritual bond in the older times has now become just legal one. The relationship between husband and wife was earlier built up on trust, affection and an emotional understanding. It was either the superiority or the inferiority complex that crushes the affection of couples in Deshpande novels. The job gives her protagonists confidence, boldness, satisfaction and self-reliance. But Deshpande insisted that economic power should not create a rift in marriage life. Shashi Deshpande conveys that relationships within the family need to be build on human values of understanding and trust rather then on the prescribed rules and discipline. Deshpande's protagonists' journey to their parental home can also be seen as a feminist journey in search of identity, self-hood and individual.

Deshpande's novels highlight the effects silence of in marital and social relations. Silence became an important metaphor in her novels. It played a major part in of the lives of protagonists. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru was forced into silence against the hatred of her mother which leads her into

a hurried marriage with Manu. But in married life also there is a silence that she has to accept. It is the rejection as a daughter that caused fear in Saru's mind which led her into silence and later Saru continues a life in silence as a wife. Though she was considered as a successful woman, the constant fear of rejection remained in Saru's heart.

In *The Binding Vine*, the lack of communication between Urmila and Kishore broke their relationships. The permanent detached look on Kishore's face made Urmi silence her emotions. She tried to reconcile herself with the circumstances or to break the silence and illusions in the end. Saru and Urmi realized that it was their sense of superiority that had destroyed the relationship between husband and wife. They decide to maintain a delicate balance between her own and her husband's self-hood. This realization filled them with a sense of victory.

Another strong symbol of Deshpande is to reconcile with each other instead of submission. The inner feelings like anger, pain, frustration, helplessness lose their strength when the human beings tried to reconcile with each other. Saru reconciled with herself against her mother's hatred, her husband's assaults and his complacencies and she finally reconciles with her own fallacies.

Urmila reconciled with her husband's silence. She decided to break the silence between her and her husband towards the end of the novel. The decision to break the silence is the first sign of liberation. From the state of passive acceptances they move to active assertion. Human nature itself is the ". . . hardest to bridge, the hardest to accept, to live with" (*BV* 201). Love is the only factor that prevents one from falling apart. It binds different human relation, keeps them intact and carries forward the life of human being. The spring of life is refilled and nurtured through the redemptive power of love. As Nisha Trivedi said, "Loving our fellows equally and selfishly we can reach above the petty problems of our individual life, and ultimately a glorious way to salvation comes to us." (Pathak 149) Towards the end both Saru and Urmi realized the meaning of marriage. They tried to compromise with the situation and their lives continue with a hope of resettlement. Life is full of choices and compromises. Even a compromise is one of the respectable choices that are developed as a survival factor by Deshpande's novels.

Motherhood always changes the whole life of women. As Gaur and Pallavi said, "A mother's concern for her children always snaps her mouth and ties her hands" (Gupta 217). Deshpande portrays her heroines whose affection toward their children is undefined. Urmi lost her daughter, and this crumbles her life. She tried to come out from the loss which gave her an opportunity to

see the life in different angle. Saru longs to see her children when she stayed in her father's house. Saru decides to go back because of her children.

Deshpande's techniques of weaving stories together from the past to the present as well as the stories of different women show her mode of representation. Deshpande not only shows the journey of her protagonists, but also the traumas of women through other character like the mothers of Saru and Urmi, Shakutai and Mira. She presents the point of view of women but there is hardly any trace of sentimentalizing or over-dramatizing of women issues.

Urmi's mother-in-law Mira's life was revealed through her diaries. She suffered in an incompatible marriage. She felt herself bound in a marriage against her choice. She had desired to become a poet. Her wishes never came true succeeded because Mira died in childbirth. Mira's life provides a glimpse in to a married life in which a girl's feelings and choice in life is not taken into consideration and this ultimately leads to the disaster.

Shakutai hailed from the lower order of society and represented the working-class women. Deshpande relates the life of Urmi and Shakutai and in order to expose the social injustice against women. "The anxiety, fear and insecurity of Shakuntala is a manifestation of the horrible reality that in male-dominated Social structure, it is the woman who has to suffer the shame of social injustice." (Agarwal 90)

Deshpande has not attempted anything new but the way she has portrayed life is very realistic. The trauma of motherhood was heightened as Shakutai expressed her love for her daughter. The character springs to life and anger, frustration, helplessness, and despair which are brought out effectively. Saru and Urmi had realised their potential as a human being. They are in the process of gaining their identity as an individual, as Saru said in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*,

> *. . . walking along a road, going on and on, knowing with a sinking feeling that something, somebody awful and frightening, was waiting for her at the end of it. But it was important to go on just the same, not to stop, even though there was doom waiting for her . . .* (DHNT 191)

Deshpande constructs contexts, representing different facets of the trapped female psyche, and attempts to transcend its boundaries. Her confident voice lends itself for an individual and also address as the universal predicament through the female psyche. But in the words of Shashi Deshpande, "I don't like to call myself a feminist writer. I say I am a feminist, but I don't write to propagate and 'ism'. Basically, mine is a quest for the human self within the

women".

The strength of Shashi Deshpande's novels is her close involvement with the subject. She presents a fair picture of life in her novels. She gifts her protagonists with a double vision to analyses their life as well as the others. Deshpande's protagonists struggle to find their own voice.

Deshpande used the first person narrative in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Binding Vine*. She uses flash back technique from the memories of their characters to exhibit their past life. But, she sensibly connects the past and present together and it never appear to interrupt the continuity and the coherence of her thoughts. Deshpande not only narrates the incidents but also participates in the life of characters. Her writings offer a broad spectrum of her craft and concern. It paves a clear way focusing on woman's autonomy, self-hood, resistance, and reconciliation in human relationships through different angles of narration.

Shashi Deshpande is one of those sensitive thinkers, who identified the various dimensions of human experiences to establish serious conclusion about the plight of the individual against the unbearable conventions of society. The modern Indian woman is educated, intelligent and aware; their economic independence prevents them from submitting completely to others. But their suffering is mainly mental, emotional and psychological. Deshpande portrays the heroines who realise their own faults, understand their own inadequacies and succeed in finding the solutions for their problems. □

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Jackson's Dilemma: Alzheimer or Quotidian Mnemonics

* *Dr. Bhubanananda Pattanaik*

Iris Murdoch (1919-1999), a major Post-War British novelist, a leading philosopher, a poet, a playwright, a storywriter and an original theorist of fiction elicits a great deal of interest all over the world. Although as a self-conscious novelist, Murdoch, had avowedly committed herself to writing in the Nineteenth century realistic tradition, her works reveal a whole lot of other issues and techniques. Always a gripping story-teller, she is seen engaging in her novels with myths, patterns, legends and archetypes. During a prolific career of forty-odd years she wrote twenty-six novels in which she has deliberately made use of many variants of narrative modes in terms of form, design and composition. Although she starts off as an existentialist, writing some sprawling symbolic novels, she passes through many recognizable changes in her career and builds a domain of her own, enriched both by experience and by experimentation. Her works record a gradual growth so far as craft of her fiction is concerned. Richard Todd in an article entitled "Realism Disavowed? Discourses of Memory and High Incarnations in *Jackson's Dilemma"* finds her long career "to have fallen into a number of phases and stages […] and this process continued until the end of her career (682)". However her realism persists all through her novelistic career not only by her incorporating all the traditional ingredients of the great nineteenth century masters like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Jane Austen but also by experimenting with contemporary ideas of Sartre, Wittgenstein, Simone Weil, Elias Canetti and Raymond Queneau among others. Her narrative devices include her theory of personality culminating in her art of characterization, contingency in regard to realism, points of vision, plot, language, the form, the closure, the participation of readers and later the use of forewords, postscripts and intrusive apostrophes. All these lend her novels a quality of unconsolatory realism and objectivity. It is against such a background that the present study posits to assess *Jackson's Dilemma* in terms of what Murdoch in *The Fire and the Sun* describes as "strong agile realism"(84), which is consistent with the steady disavowal of accurate realism. Many inconsistencies seen in the course of the novel which are generally ascribed to the writer's failing memory following her suffering from Alzheimer's have here been made an attempt to be viewed

as a new ploy on her commitment to realism by a purposeful employing of quotidian mnemonics.

Jackson's Dilemma was published in 1995 four years before Murdoch died of pneumonia as she had become very weak from Alzheimer's. The onset of Alzheimer's was, as learnt from her husband, John Bayley's *Elegy for Iris* (1999) as early as 1994, perhaps while her last work was in its gestation. In fact, many critics and reviewers go to the extent of showing proofs of the failing memory of the author seriously affecting her last work. The 1999 obituary section of *Encyclopedia Britannica* while summing up this work observed: "The troubling formlessness of her last novel, *Jackson's Dilemma*, was a sad harbinger of Murdoch's encroaching Alzheimer's disease". On the other hand there are critics who defend Murdoch's inconsistencies as a product of her deliberate disavowal of accurate realism.

Jackson's Dilemma is a short novel almost half the length of its preceding seven novels since *The Sea, The Sea* (1978). Within its relatively short space the novelist attains a "distillation of Murdoch's craft" (Todd 676). The author takes resort to a more conventional form of chapterization as the chapters are here shorter in contrast to five very long chapters of *The Green Knight* (1993). And many a scene ends in Shakespearean tableau. All these take it back it to the early existentialistic mode of novels but certainly with a difference. The difference also goes to her advantage as Murdoch no more like in 60s makes crude use of symbolism or indulges in "telling without showing"(Todd 681).

The publication of *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992) seems to set the tone for her last two novels *The Green Knight* and *Jackson's Dilemma*. She seems to enter a new phase of her novelistic career as she settles now for imperfections by attending to seemingly insignificant details and quotidian repetitions. The abolishing of central consciousness tilts its balance towards peripheral characters who naturally gain more space and attention. Jackson who plays the title role is treated as a peripheral one and is introduced as late as in the end of the Chapter One by the omniscient narrator: "Jackson was his servant" (48). Jackson serves Benet, is dismissed from service and reemployed towards the happy ending of the story. The story revolved a failed marriage between Edward Lannion and Marian. The plot as in a Shakespearean comedy resolves in many pairings and the break-up of the marriage saved not only Edward, his love Anna and their biological son, Bran but also Marian and her old lover Cantor. All these permutations of sexual and social relations are brought to poetic order by the unassuming, selfless service of Jackson. Like Maggie, the Italian nursery maid of *The Italian Girl* (1963) who served the Narraway's

house as “the eternally silent superior servant” (141), Jackson follows Benet like his shadow. He becomes “indispensable” (90) not only to Benet but also many other characters to whom he has always been a great help in “sorting out their fuses, gardens, dinners and lives”. His magical touch solves the riddle of Marian and the unselfish moral agent recedes to the periphery. Earlier Jackson was surprised at Marian’s reposing so much faith on him:

> *But why should Marian come to me, he wondered- perhaps indeed she would not want to go to Benet- but would she not have been better running to Mildred, or Elizabeth, or some girlfriend or friends unknown, somewhere else in London, who would shield her? Why me? He felt perturbed, but also a little proud. Yet what was he being proud of? He thought, she has come to me because I am a sort of nobody, a strange half-and-half being, without any strong or terrible emotions- like a fawn who finds a sleeping princess in a forest.* (139)

He has no other name than Jackson. Regarding his age when Marian asks him:

> “How old are you?”
>
> This startled Jackson. He wondered which of his ages he should most tactfully offer. He said, “Forty-three” (48).

In spite of his anonymous existence it is Jackson who embodies the super consciousness of the novel. There are many servants found in Murdoch’s other novels but nobody is comparable to Jackson. He has characteristics of both a good servant as well as that of the mystic enchanter. Benet towards the end of the novel says to Jackson: ‘Listen, I want you to stay with me, to be with me now as a friend, not as a servant’ (243). On the very first page of *Under the Net* Finn (Peter O’Finny) Jake Donaghue describes his servant as:

> *…not exactly my servant. He seems often more like my manager. Sometimes I support him, and sometimes he supports me; it depends. It’s somehow clear that we aren’t equals. […] But people get the impression that he is my servant, and I often have this impression too, though it would be hard to say exactly what features of the situation suggest it. Sometimes I think it is just that Finn is a humble and self-effacing person and so automatically takes second place.* (7)

Fivey-the manservant in *The Nice and the Good* goes a step farther from Finn

and so to some extent anticipates Jackson. Fivey possesses multiple identities expressed as regional Celtic nationalities according to whose service he is in. Jackson seems to push such spiritual definition of a servant further. He serves Benet and others as well in humility and out of love. Murdoch seems to seek an avatar (incarnation) like figure in Jackson to serve her mystic search of Christian Buddhism. At one level the dilemma facing Jackson is whether to remain a high incarnation.

Murdoch adopts for this novel both third-person omniscient as well as focalizers' points of view which account for the inconsistencies raised by various critics. Brad Leithauser in New York Times comments: "The story is psychologically rich tale of romances thwarted and revived. The writing is a mess". Rosalind in page 108 is said to be learning Russian where as in page 92 we were told that her third language is German. Here the misremembering can be ascribed to Rosalind's elder sister Marian who is the focalizer in page 108 where as that of the page 92 is the omniscient narrator. Again it is while Marian is on a sea-voyage in the southern Pacific that Tim dies; on page 108 Marian receives a telegram with the news, and telegraphs condolences from Australia. Yet a previous description states that "Marian and Rosalind were both with their mother in Canada" (90). But it is hard to say whether this passage is Marian's own memory at odds with that of the narrator. Murdoch seems to have employed a new technique here as many other peripheral characters like Mildred, Marian and Owen are found indulging in seriously commenting on other characters. The inward-looking solipsistic style of earlier novels has given way to a more serious and outward-looking manner.

Another distinctive feature of the novel is the author's excessive use of italics and inverted commas. The italics are used not only to express strong emotion but also to record its uniqueness and perhaps with a view to committing things to memory. It implies the action having been imprinted on the individual consciousness. Rosalind, in the opening chapter, while observing the events and the reception of guests by Benet and the Rector on the blighted wedding day is seen reflecting as thus: "Oh! How *weird* it was, and *terrible*, what an *extraordinary* scene as if some great ceremony were being performed. […] They will never forget it, I shall never forget it. And –they will never forgive it" (37). The use of italics by the focalizer, Rosalind is connected to the recuperative act of memory. On the other hand, the use of inverted commas interestingly point to existential. This happens only in case of Jackson and his master Benet obviously with a purpose that of existential problem. The omniscient narrator introduces Benet:

> *Ever since childhood Benet had wondered what he looked like. This wonder was connected with 'Who am I?' or 'What am I?' Benet had discovered quite early in life that Uncle Tim shared this lack of identity. They sometimes discussed it. Does everyone feel like this, Benet had wondered. Tim had said that no, not everyone did, adding that it was a gift, an intimation of a deep truth: 'I am nothing'.* (11)

Mildred Smalden speaks "in what some called an 'aristocratic voice'; others said 'like a headmistress'". When she says in Hatting she "had 'her own room'" (16). Such uses of inverted commas serve to fix characteristics, relations, prejudices and habits in the communal memory. Tuan "was deemed not to be gay", and Owen Silbury "was tall, becoming stout, but remained handsome, even 'dashing'", saved from a descent into alcoholism "by the saintly attentions of Mildred" (18). Molly McQuade in her review of this novel comments: "People are always checking up on each other, often over the phone, their words staccato, brisk, mundane" (36).

These and many such lapses of the author, which are generally ascribed to the on-setting of her Alzheimer, seem to be quite intentional. This seems to represent a subconscious rehearsal of the mnemonic technique. It has nothing to do with the cerebral condition of the author, rather it offers her craftsmanship what Lorna Sage in *Amongst Entities* describes "a deliberate aesthetic of imperfection" (25). □

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THEME OF REBIRTH IN THE NOVEL **'JASMINE'**

* S.Ve. Vijayabaabu

Change is the only thing that is not subjected to change. Citizens of any country feel proud of their own country's heritage and culture. Culture never lasts long. It is subjected to change in the long run by the social mores, socio-economic and political status of the country. New social set up and way of life of the people vary when time passes away and pave a way for deviation from the old culture to modernism. Though men and women invariably subjected to adaptation to the new culture, women's life has always been depending on the male community. Female community is directly or indirectly suppressed by male community. 'She' is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not 'He' with reference to her. To a large extent women born in a gendered society have developed characters different from men.

Bharati Mukherjee, who describes herself as having been born " a Hindu Bengali Brahmin" in Calcutta in 1940, has lived mostly in Canada or the United States since 1961, earning degrees, raising sons, lecturing at universities, and writing numerous articles, two nonfiction books, three novels, and two short story collections. Since Bharati Mukherjee has interacted freely with American culture and has not only taken but has endowed a new perspective to the land she inhabited. Her adoption to the American culture does not mean she throws to the wind her race, her religion, and her beliefs. Her belief on rebirth could be easily understood as she herself has pointed out:

> *I have a different sense of self, of existence and of morality than do writers like Malamud. I believe that our souls can be reborn in another body. So the perspective have in a single character's life is different from that of American writer who believes that he has only one life.* (35) [2]

Bharati mukherjee's **Jasmine** (1990) is primarily a novel of cultural transplantation. She has presented tradition and modernity more or less as polar opposites in the novel. Survival and reincarnation are indeed integral elements of this novel for the protagonist is known by different names at different stages of the narrative, signifying her acquisition of different identities,

different lives. It is also the account of an immigrant South Asian woman's metamorphosis, self-invention, and self-empowerment.

The novel deals with a young Indian widow's successful attempt to reshape her destiny and achieve happiness. The Jyoti, the protagonist, born in to a poor, backward Punjab village is, in the course of novel, transformed into the Jase of the closing chapter, speeding with Taylor to California 'greedy with wants and reckless from hope'. The transformation is complete. The tradition – modernity becomes the central concern of the novel.

Jasmine's career begins in a village in the Punjab, India. When Jasmine is seven, an astrologer prophesies widowhood and exile for her. Jasmine, who is named Jyoti by her parents, marries at the age of fourteen to an enlightened engineering student who educates her and renames her Jasmine. He wishes to emmigrate to the United States, but before that can happen, he is blown up by a Sikh terrorist bomb. Jasmine then sets out for the United States to realize her husband's immigration dream by proxy and also, like a virtuous Hindu widow, to commit suttee by cremating his suit (in lieu of his mangled corpse) and immolating herself in the flames. To fulfill her dream she sells herself for food and passage. In one instance, when a Vietnam veteran turned smuggler rapes her and makes fun of her husband's suit, she strikes back and kills him. She is helped by a kind woman who illegally aids refugees and who renames her Jazzy, another reincarnation. Through her Jasmine becomes a care-giver to an academic couple at Columbia University: when the couple's marriage breaks up, the husband, Taylor, becomes Jasmine's lover. He nicknames her Jase, yet another reincarnation. A final reincarnation occurs when Jasmine relocates to the Midwest. She flees New York in terror and leaves Taylor when she recognizes a neighborhood hotdog vendor as her husband's assassin. By chance she ends up in Lowa as the common -law wife of Bud Ripplemeyer, a prominent small-town banker, and becomes known as Jane Ripplemeyer. Jasmine refuses to marry him for fear of her astrologer's prophecy of widowhood, and indeed Bud is shot by a distraught farmer facing foreclosure soon after he and Jasmine begin living together. Bud is shot at and confined to a wheel-chair. Trying to make him comfortable and confident, she becomes pregnant but does not wish to marry him. She has fully assimilated herself to the American family life with adopted children and pregnancy, but is waiting for her lover which she finds when Taylor comes to her. From her duties towards others, she now thinks of her duty to herself. She changes because she wants to change and thinks of her happiness, her love, herself.

Bharati Mukherjee successfully transmits a message through Jasmine

who is subjected to multiple codes of society and geographical locales. Jasmine assimilates herself to the mainstream culture of the adopted land. The past has to be wiped out. The novelist admits that the life of an immigrant involves a series or reincarnations. In one of her interviews she confided:

> *I have been murdered and reborn at least three times, the very correct woman I was trained to be and was very happy being, is very different from the politicized, shrill, civil rights activist I was in Canada, and from the urgent writer that I have become in the last few years in the United States.* (18) [3]

Similarly, rebirth has occurred to Jasmine even immediately after her birth. She experienced rebirth right at birth when her own mother tried to kill her since she was the fifth daughter, the seventh of nine children. Daughters were curses those days. She expresses it in her words: My mother was a sniper. She wanted to spare me the pain of a dowryless bride. My mother wanted a happy life for me. I survived the snipping. My grandmother may have named me Jyoti, Light, but in surviving I was already Jane, a fighter and adapter. (40)

Jasmine's father Pitaji was gored by a bull when he had gone to visit a Lahori, someone he liked to play chess with. The Lahori consoled her mother: Why cry? Crying is selfish. We have no husbands, no wives, no fathers, no sons. Family life and family emotions are all illusions. The lord lends us a body, gives an assignment, and sends us down. When we get the job done, the Lord calls us home again for the next assignment. (58-59)

The rebirth of Jyoti into different identities is portrayed by the repeated reference made to the image of broken pitcher. Just as when the pitcher breaks the part of the sky inside the pitcher becomes a total and inseparable part of the great void outside: similarly when a man loses his earthly existence, in other words, when his body perishes, one who has had an understanding of Brahma (the Absolute) blends with Brahma to become one with him. The relevant sloka goes like this: "Ghate nashte yatha Vyom Vyomerib bhavati sphutam Tathaiva upashivilaye Brahanaiva Brahamavit swayam. " (Vivek Chudamani , 556)

Jasmine recollects the incident happened in her village, in India. Vimla, a girl of her village, whose marriage was the fanciest the village had ever seen. Her husband died of typhoid at the age of twenty one and at the age of twenty two she doused herself with kerosene and flung herself on a stove, shouting to the god of death, Yama, bring me to you (15). Jasmine recollects the incident in her words:

> *The villagers say when a clay pitcher breaks, you see that the*

air inside is the same as the outside. Vimla set herself on fire because she had broken her pitcher (her husband was dead); she saw that there were no insides and outsides. We are just shells of the same Absolute. (15)

Jasmine undergoes a similar plight. At every stage of change there are mixed feelings of fear, anger, bitterness and confusion; yet every stage is a discovery of herself. There is an undefined median between the old self and the new one. She walks American, she dresses American. But she feels uncomfortable in Professorji's house, which they have converted into a Punjabi ghetto and sees how she differs from Professorji's wife who does not give anything to America but she maintains give-and –take policy with America. She feels reborn when she holds the giant lizard in Kate's apartment:

Truly, I had been reborn. Indian village girls do not hold large reptiles on their laps. They would scream at the swipe of a dry tongue, the basilisk stare of a beady eye. The relationship of an Indian, any Indian, to a reptile, is that of a fisherman to a fish. (163)

Thus the 'giant lizard' becomes a metaphor for Jasmine's rebirth. Jasmine recollects her childhood memories of her village boys playing with lizards and women scream on seeing the lizards. She realizes how far she has been transformed to hold a reptile on her lap. Her mental set up has been changed or she has forsaken fear for lizards of her old village life and reborn with courage to hold it on her lap.

Jasmine's amalgamation into American culture can be well understood when she tells stories for Duff are about gods and demons and mortals. She tells Duff the story of Nachiketa ("Nachos "in American) and Yama. She finds her root in America and gradually becomes an American. She becomes a visible entity and assures her transformation from the old culture to the new culture. It is expressed by Jasmine as follows: America may be fluid and built in flimsy, invisible lines of weak gravity, but I was a dense object. I had landed and was getting rooted. (179)

The Indian culture has taught its people to keep their soul clean and pure. Impurities can be cleaned by one's deed. Jasmine having heard the above and having a strong belief in the creation of Lord and the soul is retained only physical structure is replaced in every birth. Jasmine tries to clean her soul after she has been raped by Half-face. She enters into the bathroom and cleans her body:

I determined to clean my body as it had never been cleaned, with

the small wrapped bar soap, and to purify my soul with all the prayers I could remember from my father's and my husband's cremations. This would be a fitting place to die. I had left my earthly body and would soon be joining their souls. (117)

Jasmine experiences violence and rape when on the very first day she arrived in the U.S.A. She is raped by the Captain of the Gulf Shuttle in which she had sailed from Europe to the coast of Florida. She calls the captain Half Face because he had lost an eye, an ear, and most of his cheek in the Vietnam War. The small knife she was presented with by a Jamaican fellow passenger comes in handy to avenge dishonor and defilement. After Half-Face has raped her she wants to kill herself but she reconciles her mission was not yet over:

> *I didn't feel the passionate embrace of Lord Yama that could turn a kerosene flame into a lover's caress. I could not let my personal dishonor disrupt my mission. There would be plenty of time to die… I extended my tongue and sliced it.* (117)

She burns the dishonoured old clothes and enacts a kind of death for her too by the death of her old self and reborn as a new self by walking in light. She relinquishes her sins by incarnation to a new self.

> *I said my prayers for the dead, clutching my Ganapati. I thought the pitcher is broken. Lord Yama, who had wanted me, who had courted me, and whom I'd flirted with on the long trip over, had now deserted me…My body was merely the shell, soon to be discarded. Then I could be reborn, debts and sins all paid for. (120-121) When the man under the influence of whisky and sexual fulfillment lies asleep, she tiptoes to the bathroom and slices her tongue with the tiny knife. She returns to the bedroom in her new avtar that is new birth as goddess Kali to punish the wicked. Her recollection after she murdered Half Face and start of her life anew instead of killing herself so that she could fulfill the dream of her husband, Prakash, reveals she undergoes an incarnation: No one to call to, no one to disturb us. Just me and the man who had raped me, the man I had murdered. The room looked like a slaughter- house. Blood had congealed on my hands, my chin, my breasts. What a monstrous thing, what an infinitesimal thing, is the taking of a human life; for the second time in three months, I was in a room with a slain man, my body bloodies. I was walking death. Death incarnate.* (119)

This process of transformation, figuratively centered in the death of one's old self and the birth of a new self, is a motif that vitalizes the narrative language and structure. But even though her Indian sensibility rebels against American codes jasmine craves to become self sufficient family with Duff and Taylor. She is not blind to certain drawbacks in American culture like the disintegration of family. When Du, her adopted Vietnamese –American son, leaves home for L.A where his sister works in a taco stand, she likes to say 'No' to Du but she doesn't prevent him going because she knows Du's decision is right:

> *Blood is thick. I think Du, my adopted son, is a mystery, but the prospect of losing him is like a miscarriage…I want to say – to be able to say – you're wrong. Bud loves you, he needs you like I do, but I know Du's right. (221) Du has made a life for himself among Vietnamese in Baden. He became American so fast. He is also transformed to new culture and is reborn. This is illustrated in Jasmine words: My transformation has been genetic; Du's was hyphenated. For the first time in our life together, he bends down, over the rifle, to kiss me. "You gave me a new life. I'll never forget you.* (222-223)

Jasmine takes the bird-view of the American life and does not touch the deeper layer of values there. At every step she is a winner, her struggles, and her inner sensibilities do not find much of a place in her life. She lives a floating life as it were, without so much as touching the realities the immigrants face. She appears to have no real address, no specific mission, no search for special identity. There has always been a conflict between Jasmine's two selves one still holding fast to traditional Indian values of life and the other as adventurer in a capitalistic culture. As in jasmine words: I am caught between the promise of America and old world dutifulness. A care-giver's life is a good life, worthy life. What am I to do? (240)

When Taylor comes to Bud's house to take jasmine with him to California she walks away with Taylor and Duff, leaving Bud for she feels pity on Bud not love and real love on Taylor and as she hopes she is an eternal car-giver. She doesn't feel guilty of her act,

> *It isn't guilt that I feel, it's relief. I realize I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane. Adventure, risk, transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through uncaulked windows.* (240*) Though Jasmine had taken many identities by way of transfor-*

mation and rebirth, she is never glued strongly to any culture or way of life. This is clearly expressed by Shakuntala Bharvani as follows: In spite of every new guise, all that changes of Jasmine is merely the exterior, there is no corresponding growth in depth and maturity (200) [4]

Jasmine having seen death and worst of life closely many times, having suffered and survived several time, she regards her relationship with Bud as a phase in her journey of new identities and thinks it was her time to transform to new phase of life and new identity and rebirth as well. □

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THE MYTHIC STRUCTURE OF *THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI*

* Dr. Balabhadra Tripathy

R.K. Narayan as a writer is deeply rooted in the Indian and Hindu tradition. His affinity to Indian folktales and *puranas* can be traced in his stories, novels and other non-fictional writings. His meaningful references to different traditional and mythical concepts in his works are significant pointers to the fact that he is the real product of the Indian narrative and puranic tradition. Like Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan has a keen interest in the Hindu tradition, religious, literary or artistic. Narayan's study of Sanskrit and classical Tamil; his rendering of the stories of the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas into English; his interest in classical music, Indian philosophy and mysticism point out that he is a true follower of the traditional Indian art, literature and philosophy. At the same time, he is a pragmatist and is aware of the world and its affairs. As a writer he tries to project some ethical reality through a mythical perspective in order to give it a universal significance. Narayan emphasizes the contemporary relevance of ancient Hindu literary works. He observes that traditional literature should become a background for modern writing with recognizable characters and characteristics.With these observations one has to study R.K. Narayan's ***The Man- eater of Maigudi*** as the novel with a definite, sustained mythical structure.

In his introduction to ***Gods, Demons and others*** (1965) R.K. Narayan refers to the importance of our classical mythology as it helps the writer make the contemporary reality more real. The characters in the epics remain essential prototypes and remain valid for all times. ***The Man-eater of Malgudi*** is, perhaps, the only major novel of R.K. Narayan which is deliberately based on the popular Indian myth of *'Bhasmasura'.* In the novel lies Narayan's dexterity in recreating the old Hindu myth of *Bhasmasura* in modern form with a sense of serious parallelism. The *Bhasmasura* parallel in the novel is clearly sug-

gested more than once by Sastri, an orthodox minded Sanskrit scholar, who tells Nataraj that Vasu shows all the definitions of a *rakshasa,* a demoniac creature. The demon according to ancient mythology, stands for the forces of disorder as opposed to the figure of Vishnu, who is a symbol of order, stability, repose and humility. Vasu, in the ***The Man-eater of Malgudi*** is a representative of evil and symbolises the negative forces as opposed to the calm and stable personality of Nataraj. By taking the help of the *Bhasmasura* myth the writer presents a fictionalised narration of the nature of evil in human life and its different implications.

The Man-eater of Malgudi has a symbolical title. Anyone who seizes the book tries to read about a tiger. Vasu is the *man-eater* as presented by Nataraj. He is wild and rough and no less ferocious than a tiger. Vasu is a taxidermist. He is in a habit of killing animals. He has been referred as a *man- eater* because of his evil nature and his ability to bully people and disturb a peaceful atmosphere. He lacks humanism and the soft human feelings. The arrival of Vasu in Malgudi creates a disturbance as the sudden arrival of a man-eater upsets the entire rhythm of the quiet life of a particular region or community and a reign of terror sets in. Finally normalcy is restored when Vasu kills himself. Vasu arrives suddenly in Malgudi and bullies his landlord, the innocent Nataraj. He creates a series of nuisance, well tolerated by Nataraj. Encouraged by his success, he plans committing the worst sacrilege possible, by killing the temple elephant during a holy procession. But ironically, as he waits for the elephant to come within the range of his gun, he hits himself on the temple to crush a mosquito and is killed instantly. Like a mythical Bhasmasura he brings his own end.

R.K. Narayan's use of the Bhasmasura myth in the novel is a conscious literary and symbolic strategy. The writer himself refers to this point as :

> *At some point in one's writing career, one takes a fresh look at the so called myths and legends and finds a new meaning in them. After writing a number of novels and short stories based on the society around me, some years ago, I suddenly come across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. It was published under the title,* ***Man-Eater of Malgudi ...*** *I based this story on a well-known mythological episode, the story of Mohini and Bhasmasura. (Narayan.Gods,Demons.47-48)*

The Bhasmasura comparison is clearly indicated in the novel in more than one place, by Sastri. Sastri tells Nataraj that Vasu shows all the qualities of a demon.The conversation between Sastri and Nataraj is clearely an indicator of the nature of Vasu. Sastri seems to be well versed in *puranas* and epics. He is a man of knowledge and insight. He goes on giving examples of demoniac nature from *Ramayana.* Then he talks about the episode of Bhasmasura :

> *Then there was Bhasmasura, who acquired a special boon that everything he touched should be scorched, while nothing could ever destroy him. He made humanity suffer. God Vishnu was incarnated as a dancer of great beauty, named Mohini, with whom the asura became infatuated. She promised to yield to him only if he imitated all the gestures and movements of her own dancing. At one point in the dance Mohini placed her palms on her head, and the demon followed this gesture in complete forgetfulness and was reduced to ashes that very second, the blighting touch becoming active on his own head. Every man can think that he is great and will live forever, but no one can guess from which quarter his doom will come.(Narayana.The man-eater.76)*

The most authentic reference to the Bhasmasura myth comes right at the end of the novel. At the end Sastri makes an attempt to make the circle of comparison perfect and complete. Vasu has killed himself by a thunder-clap of his own hand. Rangi, the temple dancer, is a witness to all undoings of Vasu. The novelist has created her after the mythical Mohini. Rangi is the only person present when Vasu kills himself. To make the Bhasmasura analogy complete the novelist tells through Sastri:

> *Because, said Sastri puckishly, 'he had to conserve all that might for his own destruction. Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the Rakshasas that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity ? He narrated again for my benefit the story of Bhasmasura the unconquerable, who scorched everything he touched, and finally reduced himself to ashes by placing the tips of his fingers on his own head. (Narayan.Man-eater.182-183)*

R.K. Narayan ends his novel, ***The Man-eater of Malgudi*****,** the way the

author of a purana would end his narrative. Vasu, the replica of the puranic demon, is eliminated. He is eliminated not by any external or supernatural agent, but by his own misdeeds. According to the law of Karma a man has to face the results of his own actions. Malgudi returns to normalcy. Nataraj and Sastri breathe peacefully. As in the past, so also in the future, conflicts between opposite forces, between Vasus and Natarajas are likely to be repeated. An essential pattern of Narayan's novels is revealed in The Man-eater of Malgudi : order - dislocation of order - Restoration of order. Before Vasu's arrival on the scene, there exists order in the novel. This order is violently disturbed by the intrusion of Vasu. At the end of the novel, order is restored, with the death of Vasu. The novel ends where it began, restoring peace and harmony to the cosmos.The full circle is complete. This structure of Narayan's novel is similar to the structure of any Indian purana. The classical and mythological emphasis on order and harmony is very much related to the concern of humanistic values. To conclude, R.K. Narayan's ***The Man-eater of malgudi*** is a novel based on myth and reality. □

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Women in the Select Novels of R.K.Narayan

* N.S.Vishnu Priya

R.K.Narayan is one of the most widely read Indian English novelists who deserve attention. He is one of the big three of the Indian English Fiction- the other two being Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. His novels from Swami and Friends to The World of Nagaraj provide an inexhaustible and varied portrait gallery of women characters. Most of the women are portrayed against a characteristic identity of the Indian middle class society which is embedded in the age old inherited weight of traditions, customs, rituals, religious faith, superstitions, conventional codes of morality and spiritual concepts. Though they share certain common traits no two of them are absolutely identical to each other in all respects. Hence they are true to life as no two individuals are thoroughly similar in life. Being a male writer Narayan has created women with their strengths and weaknesses. With this backdrop this paper tries to bring to light the women portrayed by Narayan in The Dark Room, The English Teacher and The Guide.

The theme of The Dark Room is the portrayal of "bullying husbands and gentle wives like Savitri" who are "a common feature of our traditional society" (Ram xxi). Savitri, the major woman character is the wife of a tyrannical egoistic husband, Ramani who is also an autocratic father. Narayan portrays the mind-set of Indian women, which might be natured or nourished by the age-old traditions that a girl's house is her in-law's. This is clearly portrayed in the novel The Dark Room where Savitri occasionally remembers her mother and sister. The sacrificial love of Indian women for their children is clearly shown when Savitri pleads to take the children along with them to the movie and remembers them althrough the movie.

Savitri silently bears the unwarranted insults and taunts of her husband like, "Go and see any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of a grown-up boy to me. It's none of a woman's business" (Dark Room 1). Not having the slightest power to do anything at home, she is just like a doll or the more a property of Ramani. When he takes her out, he surveys her slyly with a sense of possessing her. Gaur rightly interprets this as:

"The phrase possessing her is significantly used here as the author

intends to suggest that his wife is to him like one of his so many household material possessions and commodities such as good pieces of furniture, cupboards and utensils etc. He is proud of her in the way he is proud of his good-looking domestic articles. To him she is no more than the possession of depersonalized insensate wooden or metallic gadgets." (31)

When Ramani beats their son Babu on the auspicious day of Navaratri, Savitri sulks in the dark room as a protest. But her anger does not trouble Ramani. Informed by her friend about her husband's extra-marital relationship, Savitri at first doesn't want to question him or show her protests. On the other hand she tries to dress more attractively to draw his attention. Through this incident what Narayan wants to present is the means through which a woman tries to keep her husband under control. It was only when Ramani does not turn up that night Savitri's ego is awakened and questions his extra-marital affair. She resists all the beguiling moves of Ramani's demonstration of love and speaks with an anguished heart:

"I am a human-being. You men will never grant that. For you we are playthings when you feel like hugging and slave at other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose." (Dark Room 110)

As a last measure she threatens Ramani that she would leave the house if he does not leave the other women. At this, Ramani thinks that she is trying to nose lead (take control of) him with threats of leaving like a servant. When Savitri tries to take the children along with her Ramani interrupts saying that they are his. Savitri is raged at this and flings away all the jewellery given both by Ramani and her father saying, "Take them away. They are also a man's gift."(Dark Room 114) Here through the words of Savitri, Narayan is talking for the cause of women. Driven in a mood of desperation, she hardly sees any difference between a married woman and a prostitute. She says, "The prostitute changes her men, but a married women doesn't. That's all. But both earn their shelter in the same manner." (Dark Room120)

When Mari who saved her from drowning and his wife Ponni persuade her to come to their house, Savitri refuses saying that she will live in the open and will not share food or shelter at anybody's mercy. Thus she declares her wish for freedom and liberation. She is resolved to become self-reliant and is against the traditional concept quoted by Michel Pousse:

"The age old respect for the laws of Manu still dictated the position of women within the family. A woman could not be independent and was

meant to spend her life under the authority of a man – father, husband, or brother in case of widowhood." (37)

When Savitri eats plain rice with water, which she earned all by herself, she feels triumphant. But when left all alone in the dingy, semi-dark room she feels upset by nightmare's fear, home sick and remembers her children nostalgically. She gets the realization, "I am like a bamboo pole which can't stand without a wall to support."(Dark Room 189). She undergoes a transformation and finds through her own experience that a woman's place is by her husband and her children's side. Through this transformation of Savitri, Narayan wants to make it clear that a woman's place is always with her family. At the same time by presenting Savitri's feelings when she returns and starts living as before, haunted by a persistent realization that makes her think, "A part of me is dead."(Dark Room 208) The new woman is the one who frees herself from the emotional dependence on her husband and attains freedom within the boundaries of her home. Her taking Ramani's love and affection with resentment makes it clear that she has returned only as the mother of her children but not as Ramani's wife.

The second important woman in the novel is Shanta Bai, an anti-thesis of Savitri-"a modern and independent breakaway from convention." (Pousse 38) Unlike Savitri she is educated and graduated, ambitious to establish an independent life. Her desertion of her drunkard and gambler husband itself shows her liberation. Unlike Savitri she has no love for the comforts, security and warmth of a homely life. Not giving up her resolution to be away from home even when she is driven from pillar to post in search of a job shows her self-confidence. She is carefree, very passionate and often reminds us of Rosie in The Guide.

Being artful, cunning and selfish she acts deliberately to provoke Ramani and ensnares him. She is clever enough to develop the euphemistic sister-brother relationship between her boss and herself into an amorous one. She enjoys private movements with him through her night escapades. Like a temptress, she holds Ramani completely under her spell to the extent that he who is autocratic; tyrannical and self-willed towards Savitri is submissive, cajoling, persuasive and self-effacing towards Shant Bai. Away from the traditional barriers of husband or parents home, she drifts into the blind alley of immoral conduct. K.K.Gaur says:

" The author perhaps wants to point out the danger latent in the rapid craze for women's liberation through the moral downfall of Shanta

Bai. She shows no repentance at any stage." (38)

The other two women namely Janamma and Gangu are friends and neighbours of Savitri, but are opposed to each other in terms of their personality, ambitions and thoughts. Janamma represents the classical Indian medieval view of wives. Narayan advises Savitri through the words of Janamma advises Savitri not to disobey or argue with her husband in any situation. Gangu on the other hand is educated and fair looking who wants to represent Malgudi as a delegate to the Women's conference. Though she has free movements in social activities, she is loyal to her husband. Thus she combines in her the traits of a new emerging woman in India with a due regard for social institution like marriage. She shows that both can go hand in hand.

Ponni, Mari's wife is a frank, practical-minded and strong willed woman who is economically independent and physically powerful. She acts as a saviour of Savitri in taking her home; getting a job for her and persuading a cart driver to take Savitri back to her home. She stands unique in terms of sturdiness, moral strength and the skill of crisis management.

Susila is the major woman character in the novel The English Teacher. Through this character the author talks about all the traditional qualities, which are expected of an Indian woman. The features of a typical Indian housewife are mingled into one whole of Susila. She is identified in various roles of a considerate, dutiful, conscientious and charming wife, a loving mother, and a reverential daughter-in-law and as darling daughter of her parents.

In losing interest in studies after childbirth and confining herself to womanly responsibilities, in being thrift by habit and has far-sightedness, by being expert in financial maintenance, not giving heed to sentiments, enjoying doing petty jobs for her husband, eagerly waiting for the return of her husband, listening to her husband's college activities eagerly, hating everyone her husband hates and loving everyone he loves, being a source of freshness and an agent of replenishment of physical and spiritual power to her husband, getting acclaim from her mother-in-law, acting according to her mother-in-law's wishes, particular about the welfare of her husband and daughter even after death (not about herself anytime).

He makes it clear through the emotionally deep husband and wife relationship of Krishnan and Susila that marital relationship gets thickened much more due to the wonderful traits of Susila. She is remembered by her husband even after death. Narayan presents Krishnan and Susila were not only as ideal couple but also as friends. They make true the words of Malladi Subbamma, "To live as good friends should be the aim and object of married partners.

Sometimes sacrifice may be the touchstone of friendship."(28) The sacrifice of Susila in all aspects made her a lovable wife cherished by Krishnan. The character of Susila was none other than Narayan's wife Rajam. Hence Susila was adorned with all the good qualities Narayan expected of his wife. Talking of the autobiographical content of the novel Narayan himself has acknowledged, "More than any other book The English Teacher is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction."(My Days 135)

The other women characters in the novel are Krishnan's mother, Susila's mother, the old cook, a village woman, the headmaster's wife and Krishnan's sister-in-law. But they all recede into the background as Susila stands the most over-powering and towering character both before and after death.

Rosie is the major woman character in the novel The Guide. Though she comes from a socially despised class of dancers, she is highly educated. But she becomes a victim to the snares of both her husband Marco and Raju, the guide. She is a woman full of human feelings and undying love for dance. Unfortunately her husband never considered her as a human being. Immersed in his profession, he totally neglects his wife's desires, wishes and taste, which results in Rosie's extra-marital affair with Raju, who deftly plays upon her ardent ambition to become a Bharatnatyam dancer and ensnares her. The fact that Rosie is not basically a morally debased woman is clear in her sincerity towards her husband for his good gestures, confession of her love affair to her husband and feeling penitent for her mistakes.

It's only when she is left alone in the station, she is forced to go to Raju's house. The impenetrable self-confinement and lack of adaptability on Marco's part despite his wife's unconditional honest repentance are mainly responsible for the sorry state of affairs. Even after becoming a famous dancer she dedicates the whole credit to Raju and is particular not to loose her womanly duties. Because of her blind faith and simple-mindedness she falls a prey to Rau's greed and exploitation.

Her indebtedness for Marco's good deeds is exposed when she enthusiastically reacts to the glowing comment made about Marco's book 'The Cultural History of South India' and desires to have a copy of it. When reminded of Marco's cold treatment she admits that she deserved it. Even when she is exposed to Raju's manipulations at his arrest, she proves her integrity by selling her diamonds and shares to release him. This shows her virtue. After the arrest of Raju, she reveals her undiscovered potentiality for self-realization by succeeding all alone. This shows that she has her own sustaining vitality.

which she has under-estimated all along. She reminds us of Pousses's words, "Women speak for themselves. They no longer need men to defend them and to present their case."(35) Thus she reveals a remarkable capacity for adaptability to the changing scenario in the struggle for survival. Through the character of Rosie Narayan seems to present the vulnerable state women are exposed to, the exploitations they have to safeguard themselves of, and the intelligence they must show in times of trials and temptation. Along with it, he also exposes the attitude of men who are indifferent to the interests of men and who remain responsible for the plight of women.

Another woman in the novel is Raju's mother-a homebound, ordinary orthodox lady confined to the sphere of her husband and son. She never opposed Raju, but warned him against Rosie. Being intelligent and not attracted by luxurious privileges, she values education a lot. But being a traditional typical Indian woman, she too believes that a right place for a married woman is by the side of her husband.

Though he is not a feminist in the true sense, he clearly portrays the exploitation to which Indian women are exposed. He presents a rainbow of women characters some liberated, some traditional, some moderate. But one doesn't see Narayan taking sides. □

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MASCULINITIES IN HOSSEINI'S **THE KITE RUNNER** AND **A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS** A COMPARATIVE STUDY

* *C.G. Shyamala*

Gender studies have emerged as a discipline of international acclaim and they have been subject to myriad interpretations due to the nuances of the terms masculinity and femininity. A study in masculinity is the extension of second-wave feminism. The post-modern era considers masculinity to be a complex and heterogeneous entity. Masculinity has a history and finds diverse expressions due to social, cultural, political and psychological relations.

Stoller observes that the term gender is associated with complexities in 'areas of behavior, feelings, thoughts and fantasies that are related to the sexes and yet do not have primarily biological connotations' (Sex 1968: ix). The definition distinguishes sex which is biological and gender which is socially structured.

Traditionally, masculinity is associated with characteristics as courage, intellect, assertiveness, strength, competitiveness, virility and vitality, while femininity is characterized by tolerance, delicacy, submission, emotion and softness. Though such a distinction is based on gender roles, men generally enjoy a number of privileges. According to Josh, "Masculinity has been interpreted according to differences in class, nation, race, religion and ethnicity" (15). The gender roles associated with either gender seem to overlap as there have been evidences of such tendencies in anthropology. Psychoanalysis plays a dominant role in creating the tension between masculinity and the assertion of itself. Psychoanalysis associates masculinity with tension and anxiety due to excessive demonstration of masculinity to avoid castration. Sociology involves labor and power to control and sustain male authority. The feminists in t he early seventies argued that restrictions on women's roles were the prime cause of freedom for men to participate in major decisions. The nation and the state associate masculinity with power.

Globalization witnesses the restructuring of traditional male roles, and there fore crisis has emerged in t he traditional pattern of male authority. Studies in masculinity have attained paramount significance and modern man faces the threat of asserting himself in the modern scenario. The masculine

tradition, in all its diversities has emerged and firmly established itself as a progressive ground of study. This paper compares masculinities in the novels The Kite Runner and A Thousand Splendid Suns. The thrust of the paper is expression of patriarchy and masculine values that are in a state of flux with the changes in social, economic and political conditions of the nation. The paper is a poignant depiction of masculinities in the characters, and their psychological responses to the political situation in Afghanistan.

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. He is witness to the invasion of the Soviet army in Afghanistan that made his family seek political asylum in the United States. While in medical practice, Hosseini began writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*. Published in 2003, the novel concentrates on the aggravating political instability due to incessant war and the mass exodus of refugees to Pakistan and the United States. The rise of the Taliban regime, the psychological and social responses of the characters, and the repercussions of uncontrolled terrorism are evident. His second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, published in 2007 relates the experiences of two women who have been mute spectators and sufferers of the dominant patriarchal system amidst terrorism, and who ultimately find recluse in retaliation. Hosseini's love for his homeland forms the backgrounds of the novels.

In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini restricts the experiences of the women characters to the protagonist's wife and his mother-in-law. Moreover, the protagonist grows up in a household full of men, and his father represents a robust masculinity. Baba is a Pashtun, idolized as "toophan agha" or "Mr. Hurricane". He is depicted as:

> *Pashtun specimen with a thick beard, a wayward crop of curly brown hair as unruly as the man himself that looks capable of uprooting a willow tree, and a black glare that would drop the devil to his knees begging for, mercy.* (Hosseini)

Baba is the epitome of the Aghan man. He lives with Amir and the hazara, Ali and his son, Hussan in Wazir Akbar Khan district of Kabul. Baba loves Ali and takes care of Hassan much to the chagrin of Amir. Baba regrets that Amir isn't the masculine Pashtun he desires. When Baba realizes that Ali is fond of poetry, he says, "Real men didn't read poetry – and gods forbid they should ever write it!" (17). Amir isn't the sports-loving or the bear-hunting man. There fore, Baba prefers Hassan to Amir. Amir becomes desperate to be admired by Baba and decides to 'acquire' manliness to prove himself to Baba by taking part in the kite – flying competition.

In an attempt to make Amir bold and courageous as a man, Baba

takes him to witness the Buzkasi tournament. Though Amir is scared, he tries to enjoy the fight. After a few minutes, Amir begins to cry when the sees the chapandaz rolled into a mass of flesh by the animal. Baba is ashamed at his son's cowardice and Amir recalls "Baba's hands clenched around steering wheel ....I will never forget Baba's valiant efforts to conceal the disgusted look on his face as he drove in silence" (19). Further, Baba watches Rio Bravo with John Wayne at the cinema park. These references to American films, especially westerners are admired by Baba as the protagonists are unnaturally silent, strong and accomplish ridiculous tasks. Amir lacks the gusto and the fierceness of his father. Hassan, on the other hand, is brave and athletic. Hassan helps to rescue Amir from Assef. At the kite flying competition, Hassan helps Amir win the game, but Amir does nothing to rescue Hassan as he is raped by Assef. He does not protect his friend and in order to uphold and pride at winning the race, he sacrifices Hassan.

Baba's ideas about masculinity enter politics as he says, "There are only three real men in this world ...America the brash savior, Britain and Israel. The rest of them …they're like gossiping old women (109). This shows Baba's reflections on the image of a real man. To him, manliness means the courage, determination and firmness in taking decisions and establishing one's authority in the family and in the society.

Similarly, Baba's masculinity is expressed in religion as he say, "The man is a Pashtun to the root. He has nang and namoos. Nang and namoos Honor and Pride. The tenets of Pashtun men. Especially when it came to the chastity of a wife. Or a daughter" (126). This reflects Afghan culture where women need to be pure for men. A man's honor is tied up in the purity of his wife and daughter. It is ironical that Baba stole Ali's honor by sleeping with Sanaubar. Through the act, his masculinity, albeit is not destroyed. Sanaubar is a Hazara, and she belongs to the low class of the society. She has to tolerate injustice due to her low birth. Sociologist Connell observes:

> *Race and class can serve as categories of subordinated masculinities. The historic oppression of black males in United States society is manifest in physical (lynching), cultural (segregation) and economic (professional discrimination) abuse".* (280).

There is a definite comparison between the colonizers that exhibits hegemonic masculinity, while the suppressed are subordinate.

The anguish of Taheri at the loss of purity of his daughter, Soraya is expressed when he laments his daughter's deed of running away with an Afghan. According to Flood, "One of the idealized versions of masculinity finds

expression in notions of honor and women's virginity (160).

> When Soraya admits her deed to Amir, he forgives her and says:
>
> *I hadn't grown up among women and had never been exposed to the double standard with which Afghan society treated them. May be because it was Baba had been such an unusual Afghan father, a liberal who had lived by his own rules, a maverick who has disregarded or embraced societal custom as he had seen fit.* (148)

Amir is different from his father. He is ready to forgive Soraya and as he is not bothered about her past. He is a liberal masculinist who believes in freedom of women and equality of rights. Amir is portrayed as a person who craves a feminine mentor in the Kabul House. He reads his mother's books and writes poetry instead of playing 'manly' games as soccer, riding around on a horse with a dead goat in tow.

As the war intensifies, Amir and his father have to move into America. Once in America Baba relinquishes his authoritative Afghan masculinity and settles down as a laborer at a petrol bunk. This subordinate masculinity is revealed and Baba has to accept his fate. Sociologist Connell states:

> *Subordinated masculinities encompass beliefs, values, behaviors and attitudes that fall outside the prevailing meaning of what it means to be masculine in a given society. Subordinated masculinities are socially constructed, and views to subordinated masculinity may very from culture to culture.* (24).

Unknown to Amir, Baba has fathered Hassan. This realization shocks Amir to such an extent that he is reluctant to take in Hassan's son Sohrab as his own. Heading Soraya's advice, he decides to adopt Sohrab. Soraya is unable to give birth due to unknown reasons. To an Afghan it means that there is every chance of a remarriage. But Amir decides to go against Afghan societal rule and settle with Soraya. Amir's defiance of traditional masculinity is proved.

The novel is an insight into the shades of masculinity. War, a masculine concept is seen as a devastating force that separates families and destroys customs and traditions. The Taliban has exercised complete control of Afghanistan. Gendered differences create inequality and endless suffering. According to sociologist Kimmel, the Taliban were a group that 'saw the Soviet invasion and westernization of Afghanistan as humiliations'. He say's, "Central to their political ideology is the recovery of manhood from the emasculating politics

of globalization" (Gender). Seen from this perspective, the novel enacts the extremes of masculinity in the face of modernization.

Most critics hold the view that globalization is responsible for gender issues and pervert Islamic teachings by Al-Queda. This fact is evident in the novel. Through glaring instances, Hosseni has been successful in projecting masculinities and its nuanced interpretations.

Hosseini, at a speech given at Book Expo America on 2nd June 2007 claims:

> *I returned to Kabul in 2003 …I remember standing at street corners and seefully covered women walking. I remember thinking, who is that person inside. what has she seen. What has she endured. What makes her happy. What gives her sorrow. What are her hopes, her longings, her disappointments? A thousand Splendid Suns is in some ways my attempt in imagining answers to those questions.* (A Thousand 411-412)

Mariam is a harami, an illegitimate child, who sees her adored father, jalil once a week. Her mother Nana, protects her and tells her daughter that it would be unwise to stay with her father. When Marian does not listen to her mother and decides to visit her father's home, she returns to find that her mother has hanged herself. She is desolate and her pitiable situation turns into a monstrous saga of terror as she is married off to Rasheed, an elderly widower from Kabul. From the very first day of their marriage, Rasheed teaches her the duties of a wife and insists that she wear the burqa, 'an indicator of female oppression'. (Povey 152). Marian is silenced, cut off from her family, and has no voice in the patriarchal society. Her domestic life is her fate. To Rasheed, family honor is very important.

He contrasts his ideas of pride and honor with the wives of his rich customers:

> *They wear make up and skirts that show their kness. Sometimes they even put their feet in front of me, the other women do, for measurements and their husbands stand there and watch… They don't see that they are spoiling their own nang and namoos, their honor and pride.* (68)

Later, Rasheed comments that the teacher Hakim and his wife Fariba haveno respect for religion as she covers her head with a scarf only. To Rasheed it was like "A man who's lost his control of his wife" (69). As time goes by Mariam realizes that she has to fulfill her duties as a mother. She acknowledges being "treasured and significant" (80). Her husband's photographs of nude men

are projected as the whims and fancies of a widower. Unfortunately, Mariam suffers seven abortions and Rasheed's torments become uncontrollable. He gives vent to his frustration by frequents. One day, he purposely complains of state food being served:

> *He snatched her hand, opened it, and dropped a handful of pebbles into it….his powerful hands clasped her jaw….then forced the cold, hard pebbles into it…CHEW! He bellow….Mariam chewed something in the back of her mouth cracked…then he was gone, living Mariam to spit out pebbles, blood, and the fragments of two broken molars.* (103)

Rasheed's brutal torture is testimony to the fact that women are silent sufferers who cannot escape the wrath of their husbands. To keep men in powerful and dominant position in society, men project their own inadequacies on women in cruel and unusual ways. They beat, debase and abuse them in order to prove their own masculinity.

While Mariam's suffering is a continual habit, her neighbor Laila grows into a young girl of fifteen. Her mother has high hopes for her, when she says, "Marriage can wait, education cannot…Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more. Because society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated…" (114). Against her mother's expectations, Laila becomes a pregnant orphan due to her affair with Tariq and the Taliban's continuous attacks. Their restrictions on women are described:

> *You will cover with burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten… You will not make eye contact with men. You will not laugh in public. If you do, you will be beaten… Girls are forbidden from attending school…Women are forbidden from working. If you are found guilty of adultery, you will be stoned death.* (271)

Such impositions are the expressions of the frustrations of the subordinated males. They cannot tolerate emasculation of man. The Taliban, unable to bear this insult inflicts injustice on women. Kimmel says:

> *The terrors to emasculation experienced by lower-middle-class men all over the world will no doubt continue, as they struggle to make a place for themselves in shrinking economies and inevitably shifting cultures. They may continue to feel a seething resentment against women, whom they perceive as stealing their rightful place at the head of the table, and against the governments that displace them. Globalization feels to them*

like a game of musical chairs, in which, when the music stops,
all the seats are handed to others by nursemaid governments.
(Gender)

Their authority over women is the only solution to their embittered ego. The nation has assumed the role of a patriarch, thereby strengthening patriarchy.

Tariq is falsely reported dead by Rasheed. He has turned 60, and eventually marries her out of lust desire. He fathers a daughter Azeeza and a son Zalmai. In the face of extreme fundamentalism lives are lost and families live in poverty. Rasheed has to close his shop and the family starves. Rasheed's atrocities grow to such an extent that the two women come together to face Rasheed. Rather than the Taliban, they need to escape Rasheed. Their desperate attempt to escape Rasheed is a disaster and Mariam gets flogged, being responsible for it. Mariam bears the insults and her body is covered with blood. In Afghanistan, women who leave their husbands are seen as tarnished or marked. Not a single day passes without abuses, insults and lashing for Mariam and Laila. Laila meets Tariq one day and their affection soon grows. Rasheed understands this and decides to punish Laila. He strangles Laila to kill her. Mairam decides not to remain passive and kills him with the shovel. Mariam's crime is detected. The crime is considered more evil than her sufferings. She faces death boldly, but saves Laila, Tariq and t he children. Her death is a supreme sacrifice for the well-being of a family.

Laila and Tariq return to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. They stop at the village where Mariam was raised, and discover a package that Mariam's father had left behind for her: a videotape of Pinocchio, a small pile of money and a letter. Laila reads the letter and discovers that Jalil regretted sending Mariam away. Laila and Tariq return to Kabul to build an orphanage, where Laila starts working as a teacher. Laial expresses her gratitude to Mariam for the new life she has been granted. She expects her third child and hopes to have the child named Mariam.

A gendered nation is destructive and silences women and the minorities. As Kimmel opines:

In Afghanistan, nationalist struggles during the past two decades
often have involved control not only over geographical territory,
but also over the gendered terrain of women's and men's bodies.
(Handbook 404).

Though it reified the privileged position of men in society, and more importantly over women, their steps are unacceptable to the society. It is seen

that the Taliban resistance is a severe outcome of the globalization process.

Both the novels express masculinity in diverse points of view. Masculinity in Afghanistan centers on their women folk. The ability to control women by forceful methods is the result of the feeling of being overpowered by foreign troops. Their prerogative is to reaffirm their manhood and attain superiority and power. Continuous subjugation and relegation of women have left them live in constant fear and apprehension. Apart from gender identity societal rules and divisions based on race, class and ethnicity occupy a pivotal role constructing barriers in the stabilization process. On one hand, the Afghan men are faced with demasculinization and on the other hand, humiliation in the hands of the women who have acquired greater freedom. This feeling has seriously affected their ideals of manhood and thereby terror is unleashed.

The situation in Afghanistan of late has seen progress due to decrease in fundamentalism and fanaticism. The Afghans have begun to realize the need to restructure the society in the face of globalization. Gendered differences remain. It remains an open question whether Afghanistan would continue its developmental processes being a gendered nation. □

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Hemingway's Mighty Heroines in his Male-Dominated World : A Study of His Major Novels

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IT IS DOUBTED VERY MUCH that we need a 'new' reading of Hemingway's heroines as portrayed in his major novels. This theme has been discussed many times, often persistently. Yet, I do think, however, that a basic question about the women characters has been neglected. It pertains to the matter of their role. Critics opine that in the world of Hemingway woman gets negligible role either portrayed as weakling or having no depth and sensibility. In fact, they are not so as they are depicted. They have their potency to retain their own identity all through the novels.

It's a pity that Hemingway is strongly criticized for his portrayal of women. The critics object the portraiture of the women on the ground that the female characterizations are weak and passive. They play a negligible role. They highlight only single fact of human life. Some complain that these 'passive' heroines are just the sexual pawns of Hemingway's heroes. All through his novels, the role of woman is insignificant compared to men who are stronger, more vibrant and bubbling with greater confidence. It is virtually a man's world where women are treated with sheer non-chalance. Theodre Bardacke says that "Little has been said (about Hemingway's heroines) beyond an acknowledgement of an antagonism towards women". (Bardacke,1950:307)

Like Shakespeare, Hemingway's "perfect" women are also characterless. Carlos Baker writes :-

> *The most frequent adverse comment on Hemingway's Fictional Heroines is that they tend to embody two extremes, ignoring the middle ground. This fact is taken to be a kind of sin of omission , the belief being that most of their real life sisters congregate and operate precisely in the area which Hemingway chooses not to invade at all.*(Baker,1967:109)

In fact, on this extremism of Hemingway's women, Philip Young generalizes that the "women are either vicious, destructive wives like Macomber's or day dreams like Catherine, Maria and Renata". Arthur Waldhorn says "Hemingway's women either caress or castrate". (Waldhorn,1972:123) Jackson J. Benson says that in Hemingway we find "the girl who frankly enjoys sex and who is genuinely able to give of herself" and "the all- around bitch, the aggressive unwomanly female".(Benson,1969:29)

Pamella Farley writes :-

"In no piece of fiction or drama written by Hemingway is there a relationship between a man and a woman which is not degrading, including the idyllic romance genre where the woman is a cardboard existing solely to increase the stature of the man. If she deviates from this function, if a woman is not submissive and flat (like Catherine in ***A Farewell to Arms*** or Maria in ***For Whom The Bell Tools***), she is a bitch (like Brett in ***The Sun Also Rises*** or Margot in ***The Short Happy Life of Franis Macomber***.) For independent women are not proper foils for the male hero whose superiority requires subservience, particularly from women."(Pamela,1973:30)

Edmund Wilson puts the argument that Kipling and Hemingway resemble each other. Kipling and Hemingway show, says Wilson, "much the same split attitude towards women. Kipling anticipates Hemingway in his beliefs that 'he travels fastest who travels alone' and that 'the female of the species is more deadly than the male', and Hemingway seems to reflect Kipling in the submissive Infra-Anglo Saxon women that make his heroines such perfect mistresses."(Wilson,—:229) Carlos Baker describes Brett Ashely and Margot Macomber as deadly' females. According to him, "... these women are selfish, corrupt and predatory. They are bad for the man with whom they are involved."(Baker,1967:110)

Catherine Barkley and Maria stand as the 'allegedly docile and submissive types'. For Wilson they are incredible wish projections, youthfully erotic dream girls, or impossibly romantic ideals of wife-hood.

So many critics bring an objection against Hemingway that he is "really comfortable in dealing with men without women'… he is best of all with men who stand alone, with men in flight from women" is not exactly right. The forthcoming three chapters dealing with the women characters of ***The Sun Also Rises*** ,***A Farewell to Arms*** and ***For Whom The Bell Tolls*** prove that Hemingway is not antifeminist. Nor is he superficial in portraying the female characters in his novels either. They are depicted as the protagonists. The whole proceedings of the novel hinge on them. So it is not correct to say that the female characters are just like the sexual pawns of the heroes. They are not weak and passive as they are generally charged. Rather, they are full of strength and potency to metamorphose and initiate their partners.

The appearance of Lady Brett is very dramatic in the novel "**The Sun Also Rises**". It is a group of newspapermen and ex-soldiers of the world war, who meet in Paris for a little dancing and drinking, and then move on to Pamplona for the reason of bull fighting. The centre of the group is Lady Brett Ashley, a female given to cocktails and fornication. She is essentially a 'good sort' – likable and companionable, capable of seeing the points of a bull fight,

and of sticking just the right in addition to the particular lure which makes them all mooncalves of love.

Her appearance and activity are such that one certainly gets the impression that she is a hopeless and unscrupulous nymphomaniac – a completely worthless character. In the course of the story certain circumstances gradually come to light which may cause some readers somewhat to mitigate this judgment. It appears that her life with her husband had been no picnic – that he was a brutal character well fitted to drive a woman into desperate reprisals. At preset she appears to be engaged to Mike, a Scotchman of good social standing, and a loving fellow, a war veteran who has gone through bankruptcy.

Brett's case is far more ambiguous than that of Robert Cohn or Mike Campbell. If she recklessly imposes nearly insupportable burdens on others, she carries an even heavier burden herself. Morally, she is neither angel nor devil, but somewhere rather fascinatingly, in between. It is a bit autobiographical. It is almost as if Hemingway himself were alternately attracted to and repelled by Duff Twysden, the prototype for Brett.

However, the fact is that Lady Brett is first seen defeminized with a group of homosexuals, her hair is cropped and brushed back like a boy's. She is forever bathing and washing herself, speaks in unfinished sentences, and tries in vain to feel an emotion in church. Cohn compares her to Circe, turning men into swine, but though he is jeered at for the image, the comparison is valid.

Brett is shown to have built the edifice of her moral code. She tells Jake the way she feels on having given up her Spanish lover. It is for her an edifying experience, something which in earlier times would have been called a 'spiritual' experience, for it is a state of the 'spirit' with Brett. Her last word to Jake is very appealing. At any rate, that the one man she loved was out of the question is a circumstance that will relieve her somewhat of the imputation of being a nymphomaniac and a completely abandoned character.

Hemingway, at the present set up, presents the whole American womanhood through the network of the character of Brett Ashley.

Though her role has no such importance, yet she plays a prominent role in the novel. The whole network of the novel is entirely based on her life. Of course, she hardly appears, still her presence is felt as an indomitable and all-pervasive force. Without her the whole novel cannot be dreamt of.

Brett has been the representative of American woman who undergoes such familial tension, sexual harassment leading to utter frustration and social insecurity. The concept of American broken family is projected through her. Brett is no more in a poised state. She has lost her mental balance and a state of complacency. She is mentally shattered and emotionally battered.

As far as sex is concerned she cannot help herself. Her being nymphomaniac is situational and circumstantial. She has witnessed sundry unsuccessful sunrises. The first husband dies in the war. The second husband, a sailor, threatens to kill her and sleeps with loaded revolver. So she lives in a world of uncertainty and insecurity. But she does not gratify her carnal designs at the cost of her humanity and conscience. Her milk of human kindness is best exhibited when she decides not to be a bitch and sends Romero away.

Rejecting the world of uncertainty, she chooses the world of liberty. She seeks the help of Robert Cohn and Mike and runs after them but in vein. Nobody has assured her a pretty happy life. She has been exploited, victimized but in return gains nothing.

Having had a series of sexual experiences, knowing pretty well that Jake is sexually crippled, she returns to him as the permanent solution of her personal predicament. She makes up her mind with Jake. She does not pay any heed to his impotency. To her, impotency is better than betrayal and instability. Now her helplessness and hopelessness know no bounds. There is no limit to her despair and frustration. She takes Jake as a full stop to all her cravings.

Catherine Barkley is an emblem of love and domesticity. Moreover, she represents the Hemingway woman, the mistress who is prepared to yield everything, including her sense of selfhood, for the sake of her lover. She is all sacrifice and devotion.

Catherine Barkley is endowed with special virtues of courage, gentleness and goodness that put her in a select class beyond the usual run of mortals. She is a woman of singular charm. Towards the end, she attains an almost heroic stature. Her conception of love is complete surrender of herself to the man she loves. She merges herself with her lover.

Catherine has been Henry's solace and anchor. She tries her best not to let Henry feel trapped a bit. She assures him (during her pregnancy) that neither she nor the baby will be any trouble to him. Catherine in other words makes him free from family bondage. She consoles him. She preaches him the sense of sacrifice in love. She believes in self-giving and self-sacrificing humility. To her, love is synonymous with sacrifice. She keeps Henry in tender care. She does not let him feel upset and takes all the risks upon herself. Being bedridden in the hospital she consoles him not to worry about her misfortune. Her biological pain is superceeded by her thought of Henry's weariness about her. She now forgets her own state of sufferings and thinks of Henry's plight. She accuses herself for falling in love with him which leads to his utter despair and dismay. The very thought of his isolation troubles her, tortures her as well. So, her death has been very pathetic and heart rendering. A woman so innocent, simple, caring and sharing bears an unbearable burden that ruins her in

the end.

Catherine appears in the middle of the novel. As the novel progresses the dominating impact of her presence is marked. She remains for a little period but she leaves a lasting effect in the life of Henry. Though she plays a little role in the novel yet her role is very vital in Henry's life. Obviously, she is not the protagonist but most of the actions and settings hinge round her. Catherine sometimes dominates the arena of love. Her sense of self-surrender and submissiveness is a unique way of winning the heart of Henry. Her significance is felt very much when Henry prays God for her life. Catherine has been the part and parcel of his life. Both of them have constituted a world of paradise. They have escaped from all dangers. Now they are going to enjoy the supreme bliss. But the irony of life is quite the reverse. Catherine dies in childbirth. Her death, for Henry, comes like a bolt from the blue. His prayer to save her goes vain. It ruins his life. He gets bewildered. Now he has no alternative. His future becomes dark and void. He leaves the station with no fixed destination and determination.

Catherine dies. Henry's life turns into a nightmare. Along with it, he is left with the knowledge of the one thing man can believe in : death. He accepts the reality of naturalistic world in which death is a fact every bit as real as sex, but he also accepts the reality of love which he helped to create, and this fact is also as real as death.

But any how Catherine Barkley is immortal in her death. This immortality may be a poor substitute for victory over death, but it is the only kind of immortality, the only kind of religion, Henry can believe in. So in the psychoanalytic level it is seen that Henry attains a 'separate peace' at the expense of becoming a dehydrated soul.

Her appearance has been a bit dramatic. As the light focuses, she comes out of the cave carrying the big iron cooking platter. Robert Jordan finds her face turned at an angle and at the same time marks a strange thing about her. She gives him a formal address and he to her and sits in front of him and he notices her handsome brown hands. Now she looks him full in the face and smiles. Both of them fall in love at first sight.

"He looked at the girl, Maria, and his throat felt too thick for him to trust himself to speak. Maria looked at him and laughed then blushed suddenly but kept on looking at him" (Hemingway 1940:27)

Maria is versatile in her conduct. She is loving and lovable. At the same time she is viciously revengeful. She, as she says in above statement intends to beget children to fight the fascists. She has not forgotten the gruesome murder of her parents by the fascists. She cannot forget it. Her retaliating mentality is made obvious from her above words.

To wind-up Maria appears as the pathetic figure and remains the same till the last. In the end her plight and dismay have been multiplied. The wheel of her fortune does not move forward. It becomes more and more grievous. Her grief is quite unique to her. Maria suffers more than any other Hemingway heroines. Catherine's suffering in ***A Farewell to Arms*** begins in the hospital and ends there with her death. While her suffering is biological Maria's is of psychological. However, Brett in ***The Sun Also Rises*** is restored at last. But the sufferings of Maria is an on going process. It leads her to nowhere. The very thought of separation torments her. Without death she feels a death like experience.

In fact, Maria represents a typical American womanhood. Hardly would any Spainish girl go straight to a man's arm as Maria goes to Jordan's, nor be so ignorant of love and even of kissing could be the champion of' La goria'. She is a perfect woman endowed with all womanly virtues and goodness.

The conclusion makes a rigorous effort to reinforce the importance and significance of the women characters. Hemingway heroes are discussed a lot by critics while little has been said about his heroines. Hemingway critics opine that in Hemingway woman gets negligible roles – either portrayed as weakling or having no depth and sensibility. All through his novels, the role of woman is insignificant compared to men who are stronger, more vibrant and bubbling with greater confidence. But Roger Whitlow raises his voice in support of Hemingway's women :

"Most of Hemingway female characters have strength that has been consistently overlooked by such critics. Who have often merely adopted a posture towards the women held by the male characters with whom the women are associated."(Whitlow,1984:13)

Critics have continued either to overlook or condemn the female characters and have focused their attention mainly on the heroes and their relationship to their mission.

A close study of Brett's character shows that she is not a perversion of feminity but a modern emancipated nymphomaniac. She is an individual whose female sexual appeal and general attractiveness are exceptional.

". . . Hemingway makes amply clear, in short, that this is an exceptionally appealing woman – bright, beautiful and sexual and to call Brett "non –feminine" or "bisexual" or a perversion of feminity, is to measure her by a standard of "womanhood" which is confining indeed."(Whitlow,1984:51)

Critics like Edmund Wilson, Philip Young, Joseph Warren Beach, and Leslie Fielder describe Brett as "an exclusively bitch". This idea is strongly opposed by Roger Whitlow :

"I would strongly assert such a charge is not valid for three major rea-

sons :

1. Brett and the other characters in the novel live in a milieu in which relationships and responsibilities are intentionally loose and disordered and her behavior merely reflects his milieu.
2. While Brett's behavior toward men is sometimes thoughtless, it is never cruel, and central to an understanding of Brett's character.
3. She is a woman who, like Catherine Barkley has a mind disordered by the impact of the war. Unlike Catherine she cannot find the route to psychological health with the result that she consistently pursues, a course of self-abuse, indeed of self-destruction."(Whitlow,1984,52)

The case of Catherine Barkley is just the same. She is charged that she has lost her identity and personality in the process of love-making. But this comment is quite superficial. Catherine has moved from a condition of near psychological destruction to a state of balance and love. Naomi Grant, most correctly claims that Catherine is more mature than Frederick in to a code of love.

Maria, like Catherine is criticized as being abnormal, mindless, passive, and pathetically submissive. In contrast to these criticisms W.M. Frohock says of Jordan and his relationship with Maria, "Love is the sweeter for having to be swallowed up in death."(Frohock,1957:195)

Maria's truth, her capacity to give herself fully in love surpasses in the novel ***For Whom The Bell Tools***. A merging of love with sexual energy gives rise to a powerful sensation , a kind of intense experience in him. Despite the complaint that the love story here is quite absurd, it is accepted that Maria is Hemingway's first wholly affirmative heroine. "Maria stands for the normal in the midst of a terrible abnormality."(Baker,1967:256)

Thus, in nutshell, we can assert that Hemingway's women are not unreal, absurd and weak. Carlos Baker says :

" . . . All of Hemingway's heroines like all of his heroes, are placed in a special kind of accelerated world. We do not see them puttering in their kitchens. They are never presented as harassed mothers, their entire orientation tends to be in this connection, premarital. Wars and revolutions – the inevitable enemies of peace and domesticity, set them adrift or destroy their lives. Yet they continue to embody the image of home, the idea if not the actuality of the married state, and where they are whatever the out-ward threats, home is."(Baker,1967:113-14)

So, taking everything in to account we can say that the female characters play a vital role in Hemingway's novels. Of course it is true that their role is not spectacular yet they provide all the sufficiency to let the heroes stand up. It is also the fact that the roles of the male characters are superb. And the women

characters, nevertheless, are equally interesting. The women offer a vision of life that is more human and decent than that offered by the heroes. The most prominent point is that it is impossible to measure the stature of Hemingway's male characters in the absence of their beloveds. They are neither weak nor neglected. They have all the time radiated to enlighten their partners. Hence, their role in comparison to the males is not less significant and meaningful. □

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Body as Nature : An Ecofeminist Analysis of Margaret Atwood's ***Surfacing***

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Ecofeminism which combines ecology and feminism is a concept which establishes the underlying relationship between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. Ecofeminists are of the view that since patriarchy equates woman and nature, a feminist analysis is required to arrive at the root of environmental problems. They point out that where women are degraded, nature will be degraded and where women are thought to be eternally giving and nurturing, nature will be thought of as fertile and exploitable. Ecofeminists argue that everything in nature has got intrinsic value, anthropocentric view should be replaced by biocentric view, man should work with the land instead of trying to control it and the false dualisms based on male-female polarity should be integrated.

The Canadian writer Margaret Atwood has in many of her writings discussed various issues regarding the oppression of women and nature. Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972) can be considered to be a typical ecofeminist text. In *Surfacing,* Atwood depicts how, under the system of male dominance, exploitation of woman and that of nature go hand in hand. Ecofeminists agree that there are important conceptual connections between the oppression of nature and that of women. According to them, the traditional sex/gender system has a major impact on today's environmental problems. The female protagonist in *Surfacing* recognizes her own victim state only when she is in association with nature; her recognition is parallel to her realization of the way in which nature has been victimized by the Americans. *Surfacing* shows that disjunction from nature fragments and disintegrates the lives of individuals. The novel provides a resistance to North American civilization which is engulfing and destroying the Canadian culture and environment. *Surfacing* questions the excessive use of reproductive technologies which alienate woman from her body. Atwood's ecofeminist stance is explicit in her vehement protest against violence committed to women in the form of rape and pornography.

Ecofeminists assert that the asymmetrical power relations between men and women is the basic cause of socio-economic injustice, which is

then extended to the exploitative treatment of nature. They point out that the development of capitalism is in accordance with male gender characteristics, especially, aggression and competitiveness. Rosemary Radford Ruether is of the view that "the structures of patriarchal consciousness that destroy the harmony of nature are expressed symbolically and socially in the repression of women" (qtd. in Li 274). Dismantling the structure of male domination is the common goal of both environmental and feminist movements. The female protagonist in *Surfacing* recognizes her own victim state only when she comes in contact with nature. She comes to Quebec islands with her friends, Joe, Anna and David, to search for her missing father. The island offers her space for peaceful contemplation and she recognizes how she has been manipulated by the patriarchy, as an artist and as a woman.

Her artistic talents and her womanhood are misguided and exploited by her art teacher. He curbs her professional aspirations by saying that there were never any important female artists, so she sacrifices her interest in real art and starts practicing commercial art. Cleverly concealing the fact that he is a husband and a father, her art teacher seduces her and she conceives by him. Fearing the criticism of the society, she is forced to abort her child, an act which causes serious psychic disturbances in her. The protagonist says that he " fixed me so I was as good as new" (S 145); she realizes that he has treated her as a commodity to fit his convenience. After this incident, she feels herself as severely amputated both physically and psychologically: "I was emptied, amputated; I stank of salt and antiseptic, they had planted death in me like a seed" (S 144).

Initially, the female protagonist accepts her state with passivity. She remains nameless as a particular name will delimit her identity. The unnamed protagonist does not want to face the facts about her life, so she makes herself believe that she is married, divorced and has left her child with her husband. Her real self becomes submerged somewhere between memory and falsity. As a result of this, she remains a frigid and disintegrated personality. By aborting her child, she has allowed herself to be cut into two: " The other half, the one locked away, was the only one that could live; I was the wrong half, detached, terminal.''(S 108). The unnamed protagonist is in the second victim position as outlined in Atwood's *Survival;* she acknowledges the fact that she is a victim, but attributes the blame to some powerful external factor.

Ecofeminists point out that nature is exploited by man-controlled technology in the same manner as woman is exploited by man. Sheila Collins states that "racism, sexism, class exploitation and ecological destruction are

four interlocking pillars upon which the structure of patriarchy rests" (qtd. in Li 289). While travelling through the island in search of her father, the protagonist realizes how industrialization, indiscriminate hunting and fishing have affected the Canadian environment. When she witnesses the extent to which the harmony of nature has been hampered, she realizes that she herself has acted against nature by destroying the life within her womb.

The landscape reflects the intensity of environmental pollution. The protagonist observes that "white birches are dying, the disease is spreading up from the south" (S 7) and this is mentioned three times in the novel, stressing the havoc caused. The craze for modernization is creeping into the island; many changes have taken place during her nine years of absence – the dam has been improved, an "enormous, monumental" concrete bridge has come up "dwarfing the village" (S 17). The female protagonist witnesses that in the island, industrialization has led to deforestation. As Vandana Shiva says in *Ecofeminism,* " [. . .] the ideology of development is largely based on a notion of bringing all natural resources into the market economy for commodity production" (71-72). Shiva's assessment regarding the relation between ecological crisis and third world development is true regarding Canada too. The female protagonist hears the sound of trees being cut in the forest. She finds the marks of American aggression in the woods: "Newly broken stubs, wood and pith exposed like splintered bones, ferns trampled, they'd been here, their tractor tread footsteps dinting the mud path in front of me like excavations, craters" (S 117). The protagonist senses the presence of the surveyors who have come on behalf of the power company. She knows that the erection of power company will affect the ecological balance.

When the unnamed protagonist realizes the extent to which the Canadians themselves and the Americans have hampered the rhythm of nature, she feels that she herself has not been different from them. She finds the capitalists in a big power boat with the American flag on the front and at the back searching the lake and "deafening the fish"(S 66). She recognizes them as "the kind who catch more than they can eat and they'd do it with dynamite if they could get away with it" (S 66). While moving in a canoe along the shore of the lake, she spots a blue heron, but after a couple of days in the island, she finds it dead . She understands that the Americans must have killed the bird and displayed the corpse only "To prove they could do it, they had the power to kill" (S 116). The image of the dead heron made like a lynch victim, hung by a nylon rope, which reveals man's instinct to rape and kill, becomes the source of fear which the protagonist experiences. When she sees David and Joe

trying to shoot the bird with their camera, she realizes that they are not different from the Americans. She asserts that no one has the right to entrap or kill: "We were committing this act, violation, for sport or amusement or pleasure, recreation they call it, they were no longer the right reasons" (S 120). All these people are unable to relate themselves to the environment, "the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it" (S 116). The American way of life becomes an exploitative attitude towards nature as they see it only as food or slave or corpse. She fears that David, Anna, Joe and she herself are turning into Americans: "It doesn't matter what country they're from, my head said, they're still Americans, they're what's in store for us, what we are turning into. They spread themselves like a virus" (S 129). The term 'American' has been used to refer to all power maniacs like Hitler: "But Hitler was gone and the thing remained [. . .]. Are the Americans worse than Hitler. It was like cutting up a tapeworm, the pieces grew" (S 129). The sight of her father's corpse in the lake reminds her of the foetus which she aborted. She feels guilty for her inability to resist abortion. She connects this incident with the killing of fishes and heron: "A part of the body, a dead animal. I wondered what part of them the heron was, that they needed so much to kill it" (S 119).

Ecofeminism advocates pacifism, as aggression results in domination, which in turn leads to the oppression of one group by another. Canada suffers the threat of American infiltration into its territory; the protagonist expresses fear of American rockets and finds that beneath an innocent hill lies "the pit the Americans hollowed out" (S 9). She realizes that the environment and the people will be safe only if the capitalists and Americans are destroyed .

The protagonist realizes that rape of nature and that of woman go hand in hand, under the system of capitalist patriarchy; men kill beavers for the same reason for which they exploit women. As Rigney states, "Violation of nature by society is paradigmatic of the violation of woman by man" (*Madness* 101). Her awareness of the patriarchal traps reaches its climax when David, insisting on his right over her as husband, forces Anna to be photographed in nude along with the other objects in 'Random Samples', the film which he has been making. Like a true ecofeminist, Atwood vehemently protests against the abuse of female body in pornographic films. As Maria Mies states in *Ecofeminism*: "Fulfillment of the desire for wild nature is satisfied not by working on the land but by adventure tourism; the search for sexuality and erotic relations is satisfied not by loving real live women but by pornographic magazines or sex- tourism"(143). Satisfaction of the needs is sought by purchasing images, which result in commodity production and consumption. As

Mies points out, “The capitalist commodity production system can transform any desire into a commodity” (143). Stephanie Lahar observes that when living things are transformed into commodities, “life and feeling”(96) are erased. David’s camera has invaded Anna’s female image, it has, for ever entrapped her artificial self within its luminous lens. The female protagonist knows that David and Joe will now attempt to entrap her in the remaining reels. She empties the films into the lake, she does not want hundreds of Annas to be “bottled and shelved” (S 166), she does not want woman to be an “imitation of a woman who is also an imitation, the original nowhere” (S 165) to be found.

Atwood’s female protagonist realizes that it is the dissociation with nature that has left her as a fragmented personality. She begins to reject all that represents the masculine ethics and attempts to lead a life in harmony with nature. As her identification with the environment deepens, her body itself becomes the biological region.

Her act of abortion has severed her from the laws and rhythms of nature and she feels guilty for not having the courage to resist it. The power for destruction can be balanced only by the power for creation, so she decides to bear a child and rear it in the most natural way. She chooses Joe to father a child as she knows that he is better than the others, and has not yet been turned into an American. When she conceives a child, she recognizes her capacity for death and also for life.

Atwood questions the excessive use of reproductive technologies which alienate woman from her body. Maria Mies in *Ecofeminism* states: “Reproductive technology alienates both men and women from their bodies and from this most intimate process in which they normally co-operate with their own nature, which they want to experience as creative, productive and spontaneous” (139). Pregnancy and childbirth are considered not as a natural process, but as a disease, in which woman is constantly monitored and assisted by medical technology and is made to co-operate with scientific industrial production process. The female protagonist in *Surfacing* considers reproduction to be an exclusive female power, so she decides to give birth to a child in the most natural way . She does not want the child to be taken out with a fork “like a pickle out of a pickle jar” (80), for it induces one to believe that reproduction is not the woman’s power, but that of man and his technology.

The protagonist wishes to eliminate everything from her history and

to flee technology. She burns her father's canonical texts as he represents to her, sheer rationality. She burns her drawings and brush as they no longer represent her future. She smashes the mirror as it reflects only her artificial self: " I know that the brush is forbidden, I must stop being in the mirror. I look for the last time at my distorted glass face: eyes light blue in dark red skin, hair standing tangled out from my head, reflection intruding between my eyes and vision. Not to see myself but to see" (S 175). She throws into the fire the ring which her non-husband presented, which she often fancied to be her wedding ring. By destroying it, she accepts her personal history and effaces false memory. As the female protagonist links her own life with those of the other beings of nature, she is able to sense the rhythm of nature, its cycle of birth and death. She attempts to merge with the animal world by abandoning all rational points of view. As she begins to act according to instincts, she is able to experience even the physical sensations of animals . Her identification with environment becomes complete when she says, "I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning. [. . .] I am not an animal or a tree, I am the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place" (S 181). She feels that she is part of the landscape: "I am part of the landscape, I could be anything, a tree, a deer skeleton, a rock" (S 187).

When her body comes to be in communion with nature, the female protagonist overcomes her frigidity, regains sensitivity and for the first time after several years, she is able to weep her heart out. She is powerful, for she is natural, human and saintly at the same time . She dodges like an animal, blood swells within her body "like sap" (S 185), yet she remains as a natural woman with "eyes staring blue as ice from the deep sockets" (S 190).

After her three day initiation into nature, she realizes that she can no longer remain a victim. She knows that in the city, there is the pervasive menace of the Americans but she has gained the strength to resist them. Hence she says with determination: "They exist, they're advancing, they must be dealt with, but possibly they can be watched and predicted and stopped without being copied" (S 189).

The surfacer does not want to be a victim, nor a killer, but to live in harmony with nature. In an interview with Jim Davidson, Atwood says that Canada's political choice should be "One that's fairer to the environment , not as hostile to Nature, has a more egalitarian view of citizenship, a more co-operative view towards how the economy should run – instead of ruthless individualism, every man for himself , the kind of thing you get in the States"

(90). In an interview with Gibson, Atwood highlights her purpose in *Surfacing:*

> [. . .] you can define yourself as innocent and get killed, or you can define yourself as a killer and kill others. The ideal would be somebody who would neither be a killer nor a victim, who could achieve some kind of harmony with the world, which is a productive or creative harmony, rather than a destructive relationship towards the world. (16-17)

Atwood juxtaposes city and island, the former represents a mechanical view of life and the latter, a life in harmony with nature. The female protagonist remembers her childhood as defined "between two anonymities: the city and the bush" (S 59). She contrasts the attitude of her friends with that of the people in the island. She remembers her mother as possessing perilous innocence and she is often associated with garden and jays. While on death bed, her mother was "very thin… skin tight over her curved beak nose, hands on the sheet curled like bird claws clinging to a perch" (S 22). David and Anna, in contrast to the islanders, are microcosmic representatives of our technological generation. David suffers from an atrophy of the heart, he loves nothing alive; he represents a generation which lacks emotion. David and Anna are victims and victimizers, they can't discern the natural from the artificial. As the female protagonist becomes a creature of nature, she is able to smell the artificiality and modernity of her friends from the city and the "scent bring nausea" (S 183). When they come to search for her in the island, she observes that "they talk in numbers, the voice of reason"(S 185). She feels that there is no naturalness in them and they are turning into machines. "Their skins are red, green in squares, blue in lines and it's a minute before I remember that these are fake skins, flags… They are evolving , they are half-way to machine, the leftover flesh atrophied and diseased , porous like an appendix" (S 184).

The ecofeminist imagery employed in *Surfacing* serves to strengthen the theme of victimization of nature and woman, survival and reintegration. The metaphor of fishing, of Random Samples, of frog in the jar, of machine in the garden suggest victimization and entrapment. Atwood employs masculine images to indicate violence and feminine images to indicate peace and harmony. Landscape and lake are used as metaphors which ultimately help the protagonist to acquire integration of mind and body.

At the superficial level, the metaphor of fishing represents the senseless killing that the Americans perform in Canada's nature. But at a deeper level ,

this is suggestive of victimization of woman by man. The pictures in Random Samples which include fish guts and dead heron form images of entrapment, death and decay. This sense is imparted by the very first sentence of the novel which mentions the death of white birches. The slow spreading civilization which is about to engulf the company town is described as a disease, like the gradual spreading of measles.

The image of foetus which recurs in the mind of the female protagonist suggests her guilt and self repression. The image of foetus enclosed in a container which is reminiscent of the metaphor of the frog in the jar suggests victimization.

'Machine in the garden' motif is established from the beginning the novel. Sounds of motor boats in the lake, fishing poles and bullets in heron suggest how nature in its primeval and raw has been infected with mechanistic civilization.

In *Surfacing,* Atwood employs masculine and feminine images to suggest violence and peace respectively. Her brother's scrap books are full of pictures depicting "explosions in red and orange, soldiers dismembering in the air, planes and tanks" (S 90) which indicate destruction. In her own drawings, there are no monsters, wars, explosions or heroism, they are of "eggs and rabbits, grass and trees, normal and green, surrounding them, flowers blooming, sun in the upper right hand corner of each picture, moon symmetrically in the left" (S 91). Thus her pictures visualize a peaceful world in which beings are in harmonious relationship with each other. By depicting the sun and the moon on the same page, she attempts to balance the power structures. This symbolism is present in her scene of impregnation, where she depicts the moon on the left hand and the absent sun on the right.

Atwood's female protagonist respects the power of the landscape. The landscape in this novel is a wilderness area of woodlands and lakes which provide a feminine setting in opposition to mountains and peaks, which suggest a masculine setting. The setting emphasises the representation of the earth as a female body. Forest and lake provide the archetypal setting for exploring the relation between human beings and environment. The journey through the landscape is concurrent with the journey into the past. The protagonist's delving into the lake is symbolic of her going back to the womb or entering a pre-symbolic realm in Kristevan/Lacanian terms. When she rejects the patriarchal civilization and recognizes the feminine nature within herself, she is able to communicate with nature, regardless of language. Through this communion, she identifies the harm done to her body, by the dominant masculine order, as

the harm done to nature and all beings and vice versa. Her refusal to accept the victim role as inevitable springs from this vision. The protagonist awakens to the reality of her own victim state only when she surfaces in the lake, thus "surfacing suggests emergence from sub-realms" (Stewart p.157). It is significant that during the first view of the lake, she feels that it lies before her "blue and cool as redemption" (S 15). Water is a traditional symbol of consciousness and it is when the protagonist delves deep into water that she comes to terms with her fractured consciousness. As St. Andrews comments, "Water becomes the symbolic element for that peaceful unification. In Atwood's *Surfacing,* water is the medium of purification and rebirth" (104). Atwood connects water with the Canadian identity also, because she mentions in the American Poetry Review that, "Water is important in my work because if you look at an aerial map of Canada you will see that there is more water per square mile there than in almost any other country on earth. Therefore, the key element for Canada is water"(cited in St.Andrews 104).

In *Surfacing,* the textual voice, which is in the first person, does not designate a particular name. Absence of a single name is significant, as singularity and confinement are considered to be male modes of thought. With the protagonist's progressive identification with the creatures of nature exploited by the masculine order, the voice 'I' gains multiple identities and signifies objective status. This muted 'I' experiences "paralysis of the throat" (S 19) to communicate thoughts and desires through phallocentric language. The power of the language to repress female experience is emphasized, when the protagonist says, "a language is everything you do" (S 129). In this system, the protagonist considers silence as more articulating and associates it with her mother: "My father explained everything but my mother never did, which only convinced me that she had the answers but wouldn't tell" (S 74). When the protagonist reaches the semiotic realm of silence she is able to communicate with nature, effectively, through the "other language" (S 158), the language of the female body.

In *Surfacing,* Atwood depicts the manner in which capitalistic patriarchy effects the marginalisation of woman and destruction of biodiversity. The protagonist, by identifying her body with nature, recognizes her exploited stance in relation to environment and refuses this collective victim state as inevitable. Atwood questions the violation of female body through pornography and rape and the excessive use of reproductive technology which dissociate woman from her natural body. As a powerful ecofeminist, Atwood questions the patriarchal essentialism that masculinist values are the essence of human nature and power structures are concomitant. Atwood envisions a just world free from patriarchal,

colonial and exploitative values where beings are in harmonious relationship with each other. □

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JAYANTA MAHAPATRA: A Notable Laureate In the World of Indo-English Poetry

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Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the most esteemed names in the domain of contemporary Indo-Anglican poetry. He is usually regarded as a post-modern experimental poet. An important aspect of the new poetry or modernist poetry pioneered by Ezekiel and Daruwalla has been a constant encounter with the personal and immediate perception in relation to the outer reality or the external world. In the sixties, Indian poetry in English entered a very exciting phase of creativity in the form of arrival of fresh talents; such as Shiv K Kumar, R Parathasarathy, A K Ramanujan, Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar, A K Mehrotra, and Jayanta Mahapatra. Of them, Jayanta Mahapatra enjoys a unique privilege and shares it with A K Mehrotra. In fact, both of them view poetry as a structure of images and deal with their obsessions, memories, doubts and other personal experiences.

Mahapatra has confronted excruciating, harrowing and traumatic childhood. He was meek, shy, often an object of mockery and embarrassment in school. He was doubly detached from his ambient atmosphere—he was born into a Christian family in predominately-Hindu neighborhoods, and, he wrote in a tongue, which was not his vernacular. It was conservatively thought that English was an outlandish parlance and could not be a medium of expression of edifying fortitude of our native land. Although he preferred this alien channel of utterance and articulation, the sum and substance dominate his poetry are connected and communicated to the pragmatic and stark reality of Orissa as well as India such as hunger, myths, rites, rituals and sometimes they transcend all that is mundane and terrestrial to embrace the universal significance as, sexuality, spirituality, self and eternity. He is a kind of attentive awareness of the darker realm of being.

He has some salient features, which makes him distinct from most of his contemporaries. He belongs to lower middle class family while most of his contemporary poets hail from well groomed and highly educated ancestry.

He started writing poetry at an age when people stop writing poetry. He was forty then. He himself confesses: “My poetry came at an age when most poets would have been basking in the warm glow of success.” Right from 1971, he has published twenty volumes of poetry, which is a record in the history of Indian English Poetry which is approximately, two hundred years old. Some are yet in the pipeline as he is still coining the verse even more maturely than

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he did ever before in the teeth of chronic asthma and recurrent migraine.

Moreover, he is the first poet in the Indian English Poetry to grab Sahitya Akademi Award, the biggest in the field of literature, in 1981 for his ambitious and magnum opus, 'Relationship'.

His poems are published comprehensively in highly reputed journals of the world:

- ü Chicago Review(U.S.A),
- ü New York Quarterly(U.S.A),
- ü Poetry(U.S.A),
- ü Sewanee Review(U.S.A.),
- ü Critical Quarterly(England),
- ü Times Literary Supplement(England),
- ü Meanjin Quarterly(Australia) and
- ü Malahat Review(Canada)
- ü Rock Pebbles (India)

He is the poet who commands respect and recognition in foreign-countries more than at home. In an interview with Sumanyu Satpathy, he expresses his predicament thus:

"I got more encouragement from academics outside my country than inside because I was not writing the type of poetry that appeared in Bombay."

C.L.L. Jayaprada has similar opinion and in Indian Literature Today, the author writes: "He is the case of a writer who first recognized abroad before getting deserved attention at home. Even now one could say that critical output on Mahapatra is not appropriate to his own work"

Even Arun Kolatkar also has similar observation: "His work has been published in several important anthologies, including The Poetry Anthology (1912-1977) edited by Daryl Hine and Joseph Parisi. Despite these significant achievements, Mahapatra's work haven't got the attention it deserves in India."

Generally, it is observed that the faculty of science has poor control on language and literature. Though Mahapatra is an academician of Physics, he treats the poetry with great fervor and vivacity. He converted this adversity into opportunity. In an interview to the newspaper 'The Hindu', he emphasizes: "Physics taught me that time held you captive, but it also made you free. I was nothing but an infinitesimal speck floating in the vast universe. This broadened my vision, but I also feel pressurized, burdened by the weight of time."

In this regard, the observation of famous and critical critic, M K Naik is also plausible and interesting: "In his persistent use of images drawn from the world of science, especially in his early verse, Mahapatra has few peers among his contemporaries. The presence of these images can be easily accounted for,

when it is remembered that physics is Mahapatra's 'Kitchen Wench'."

It is further substantiated and supported by following example:

"Mahapatra establishes three plausible relations between a poem and a reader by applying **'Electrostatic Theory of Physics'**. A poem is essentially an experience and this might

(a) Reach the reader almost immediately, spontaneously—in the manner of electric charge passing through a good conductor such as copper oriron; or

(b) Reach the reader with difficulty, slowly, under great stress, like that of charge passing through a bad conductor like glass; or

(c) Not be able to pass or communicate at all, as though there was a break or gap between them...

The capacity or power for conducting the essential experience of the poet will primarily depend upon the poem itself—on the poem's design."

It is his knowledge of Physics that enables him to explain the relation between a poem and the reader in splendid way. In addition, can we predict promulgation of such principle from a pure literary pundit? Finally yet importantly, the poet is peerless in profundity, prolificacy, peculiarity and poignancy of his poetic imageries, symbols and visions. Mahapatra's poems have a cornucopia of images. He grips them by the sleeves. He draws his images from family and domestic life, from culture, myth, science, and nature where rivers, sky, sea, rocks and stone, everything become alive in images. His poetry accentuates a keen consciousness of cultural and sociological traditions of his native locale but his visions and imageries seem to surpass all regional or national boundaries to attain universal appeal and implication. His poetry is varied in theme and content but what enhances the appeal of his poetry is his individualistic stance on the role and function of imagery. This puts the uninitiated reader under severe strain and perhaps because of such difficulty Mahapatra remains ignored by the general readers and critics as well but persistent readers are certainly be rewarded if they try to extricate themselves with the valid meaning or argument from them.

Mahapatra has taught Physics as a senior professor for a long time in the famed Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. In a revealing interview, he even declared his intention of abandoning his teaching job for giving more time to poetry. His late starting of writing poetry did not deter him from the path of creativity. Two important factors have also contributed to his development as a poet of distinctive originality. His encounter with Physics made him analytical, detached and ambivalent towards phenomenal world and ancestral beliefs at the same time. Similarly, his attitude towards poetry is quite exploratory but initially his feel for words and their sound qualities made him turn towards it.

As for his themes, he is a personal poet, obsessed with hunger, poverty, loneliness and a search for roots and self. His attitude to Orissa, the place to which he belongs is, however, a matter of deep concern. As M K Naik has rightly pointed out, Mahapatra's poetry is 'redolent of the Orissa scene' and even the titles of his copious poems demonstrate the unmistakable hallmark of Orissa:

1. Dawn at Puri
2. Bhubaneswar
3. Orissa
4. Main Temple Street, Puri
5. The Abandoned British Cemetry at Balasore, India
6. The Temple Road, Puri
7. Konarka
8. Rains in Orissa
9. The Captive Air of Chandipur-on Sea
10. Tourists at the Railway Hotel, Puri
11. In an Orissa Village
12. In the Autumn Valleys of the Mahanandi
13. Living in Orissa
14. Deaths in Orissa
15. The Chariot Festival at Puri
16. A Brief Orissa winter
17. Puri

In critical evaluations, he is usually described as a significant poet of Oriyan sensibility but this is only partially true. As a matter of fact, Mahapatra's poems deal with intricacies of human relationships, social problems of post-indepdence phase, personal themes of love, sex, sensuality, marriage and philosophical or cultural issues as well. In addition to these, Mahapatra has a special interest in the predicament of man vis-à-vis Nature, Time and rush of history. He is an academic poet but his poetry is highly personal, allusive, ironic and even confidential.

If we map contour and compass of his poetry, we find that he has made every attempt to metamorphose from Oriyanness to Indianness and the books titled 'Temple' and 'Dispossessed Nests' are the best and relevant example of this. The former book deals with the weal and woes of ordinary women of India and the latter denounces barbarous and brutal killing of the innocents by the extremist and large-scale death and devastation of human beings in Bhopal Gas Tragedy. Moreover, he is the avid fan and follower of Mahatma Gandhi's thought and ideology. Gandhi and Gandhism is the recurring captions, theme and essence of his multitude poems: The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of a Republic: 1975; Gandhi; 30th January, 1982: A Story (M Gandhi); The Fifteenth of

August; Red Roses for Gandhi and Bewildered Wheatfields. At the same time, Mahapatra is shattered at the deteriorating and declining moral and conduct of the people of India, which is in defiance of the Gandhi's preaching and contemplation. Mahapatra reveals his worries in an interview with Sudeep Ghosh thus: "I belong to a lost generation. I can't look into the future. You see, we were brought up on Gandhi, Dostoevsky and Tagore. Today, any trivial act ends up in violence; there is no more tolerance in people, or in organization. Gandhism is a word, a metaphor for people. We appear to have lost our ideals."

Mahapatra is adept and ambidextrous in short and long poems. Bruce King has suggested that there is 'variety' in his poetry. His early poetry bears resemblance to various modernist and post-modernist movements in poetic styles and theories of craft (e.g. collage, Montage, Beat movement). In the next phase, this kind of abstractionism or surrealistic word play is assimilated within a proper structure. In the last phase, there is greater clarity by means of the poet's wrestling with location, myth, ritual and cultural background.

Mahapatra is a reflective poet with ironic stance. It is a poetry of exploration where the need for survival with dignity in the midst disease, corruption and decay seems to be basic preoccupation. He is a master of many rhythms and harmonies. He is at times satirical but at other times, he is confessional but never lapses into mysticism or solipsism. Even in his early poetry, one can notice poet's struggle with words and phrases as an attempt to come to terms with the hard reality.

If we take a bird's eye view of the title of his volumes of poetry, we can easily conclude what could be the theme and matter of his poetry. Most of them imply tragic vision of life to which the poet is predominately and essentially committed. They connote bleak, barren, loneliness, silence, frustration and repentance:

(i) Close the Sky, Ten by Ten
(ii) Waiting
(iii) The False start
(iv) Dispossessed Nests
(v) Burden of Waves and Fruits
(vi) A Whiteness of Bone
(vii) Shadow Space
(viii) Bare Face
(ix) Random Descent &
(x) The Lie Of Dawns: poems 1974-2008

Critics, authors, analysts and readers complain of lack of humour in his poetry. For this, he has his own reason and defense. In a conversation with Sudeep Ghosh, he reveals: "Oh well, may be I was made that way. It is difficult

for me to be humourous in the poems I write. There is so much despair in the world around me – so much hate, so much injustice, so much poverty. And religious fanaticism, for no reason. I wish I could write a humourous poem. I haven't."

In short, Jayanta Mahapatra finally emerges as a poet of human conditions and grows into one of the finest contemporary Indo-Anglican poets. Mahapatra is a poet of quiet but ironic reflection of life's bittersweet memories, happenings and revelations. Indeed, in recent years, a number of reviews, articles and discussions have taken place and the poet himself has clarified his position in his own articles and speeches but even now, he remains a neglected poet. Some of his best poems: Dawn at Puri, Hunger, The Whorehouse in Calcutta, A Rain of Rites, Grandfather, Total Solar Eclipse, Temple, The Lost Children of America, Indian Summer Poem, Evening Landscape by the River, The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of a Republic: 1975, have found mention in curricula of various schools, colleges, universities of the country and the world as well as in the anthologies of Indian and world poetry in English.

He has been editor of some literary journals and newspapers. They are:

(i) **Chandrabhaga** is a bi-annual literary periodical, named after the eminent but arid river of Orissa. This magazine is of great significance to the poet as it provided launching pad to the poetic career of Mahapatra as he was able to establish approach and rapprochement with numerous editors and publish his plenteous poems in, of copious and coveted monthlies of the world. The publication of this journal ceased in 1985 after fourteen issues due to financial crunch and it has been again revived in the year 2000, in the wake of the earnest request and substantial support from his friends, followers and poetry lovers especially Rabindra K. Swain. Since then the magazine has been publishing uninterruptedly until date.

(ii) South and West (U.S.A. special India issue, 1973)

(iii) The poetry for the Sunday edition of the Telegraph

(iv) The poetry journal 'Kavya Bharati'

Moreover, his writings in prose have also appeared in various special issues. A special issue of ROCK PEBBLES (Vol. XV No.1) in the year 2011 has been published on him. He has published a collection of short story (The Green Gardener) in English and composed poems in Oriya to canvass and win the love, affection and support of local people. Besides, he has also translated poems from Oriya and Bengali into English, which signifies his trilingual possession. He has won several laurels and distinguished awards inside and outside the country.

The list of select honors and awards conferred to him is:

1. Jacob Glatstein Memorial Award Poetry, Chicago, 1975
2. Cultural Award Visitor, Australia, 1978.
3. Japan Foundation -Visitor's Award, Japan, 1980.
4. Sahitya Academy Award, National Academy of Letters, New Delhi, 1981.
5. First Prize Scottish International Open Poetry Competition, 1990.
6. Gangadhar National Award For Poetry, Sambalpur University, 1994
7. Invited Poet, Weltklang Poetry Festival, Berlin, Germany, 2006.
8. Bishuva Award, Prajatantra Prachara Samiti, Cuttack, 2007.
9. Padma Shree Award India's Padma Shree Award, 2009
10. Allen Tate Poet Prize for 2009 from the Sewanee Review for his poems published in it in 2009.(26 July 09)
11. An Honourary Doctorate by Ravenshaw University, Cuttack (02 May 09)
12. Padma Shree Award' from the President of India (26 Jan 09)
13. The 1st. Rock Pebbles Award, 2009.

Despite the mixed blessing of Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry, he was, he is and he will be remembered and mused by the poetry and literary lovers, in and out of the country, by virtue of the seeds of the verse sown by him. So let us conclude this essay by quoting an extract from the renowned British romantic poet, brimming and bubbling in confidence, P.B. Shelley: *"If I have been extinguished yet there rise, A thousand beacons from the spark I bore".* ☐

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Winnie Louie In The Kitchen God's Wife

* S. Mohana Priya

Amy Tan, born in Oakland, California, as the daughter of two Chinese immigrant, gained both popular and critical acclaim by writing about relationships between Chinese immigrant and their American born children. She has written several novels like **The Joy Luck Club, The Kitchen God's Wife, The Hundred Secret Senses, Saving Fish From Drowning**, and **The Bonesetter's Daughter** and a collection of essays entitled the **Opposite Of Fate: A Book Of Meanings And Two Children Books.**

Tan seemed to feel the pressure of success in the way she worked, too. She wrote every day, usually for six to eight hours. But there were days when Tan worked so diligently, she closed the curtains in her office and had no clue if the sun had set. On those days, she worked around the clock. There was some frustration in her efforts to create her next novel. Tan wrote hundreds of pages for seven novels before coming up the story for **The Kitchen God's Wife**.

The Kitchen God's Wife is the shy of Winnie Louie or JiangWeiwei, the protagonist and principal narrator, the daughter of a wealthy Shanghai cloth merchant and his second wife. Her mother abandons her when she is six years old. Winnie leaves her home to live on Tsunmine Island for almost twelve year with her paternal uncle family. After an arranged marriage to young man named Wen fu, she and her pilot- husband at first move ahead of the advancing Japanese army and then live for seven years Kunming. Unhappy with her brutal treatment by a cruel, self-centered man, Winnie runs away, but she is picked up by the police and put in prison for more than a year because Wen Fu accuses her of being responsible for the death of their son, who was the victim of an epidemic. Later released Winnie escapes to America, where she marries Jimmy Louie and has two children, Samuel and Pearl. Welli sends Danru to stay with Hulan and Grand Auntie Du so that he will be safe from Wen Fu. Both Danru and Jiaguo die in an epidemic. When Fu uses Danru's death as an excuse to have Welli arrested for stealing his son. Because Welli cannot produce her divorce papers, She is found guilty and sent to prison. She is there for a year before Auntie Du procures her release by hinting to prison officials that Welli is related to powerful communists, who are about to take

over Shanghai. Welli sends Jimmy a telegram with the news of her release from prison, and he sends back money and US visa. She buys an airplane tickets, but still wants to secure her divorce from Wen Fu. She and her friends trick him and force him to sign the paper, but he follows Welli home afterward, destroys the document, and rapes her at gunpoint. Nine months later, in the United States, Pearl is born. Winnie finishes telling her story to daughter Pearl, leaving unresolved the question of whether Wen Fu is Pearl's father. Pearl reveals her own secret, her multiple sclerosis. She, Helen, and Winnie plan a trip to China to find medicines for Pearl. Winnie finds an unnamed goddess – the Kitchen God's Wife, renamed Lady Sorrow free- to replace the Kitchen God on Pearl's alter.

Winnie Louie is the fullest character in the novel since the novel encompasses her entire life from childhood to present. More importantly, she tells her own story, and, in addition, we are privy to not only her own view of the story, but also the vision of how her own daughter sees her. It is because of all of this that Winnie becomes the most multi-dimensional character in the novel. Also significant, she is a character that goes through a great many names, symbolically illustrating the changes that occur within her as her life progresses. Winnie's life begins as the innocent Jiang Weili. To her mother she is Syin ke (heart liver), which is much like saying "my love;" to Auntie Du she is Syuaning, or "little person." To others, like Peanut, she is Weiwei, and still to others she is Jiang Weili or Weili. Later, she is to become Winnie and then Winnie Louie. With every change of name there is a change within her.

Winnie begins her life as a young woman who is optimistic and hopeful, despite the loss of her mother and the hardships she had to endure as a child. She then becomes the wife of Wen Fu, a plight she is too weak to leave behind and yet one in which she is always strong. This contradiction of being "weak and strong" at the same time is exemplified in the novel through a chapter titled "Weak and Strong." When she gets married Winnie knows nothing about sex and is quite naive—she has had no one to teach her, and so it is Helen that takes on the motherly role, in this respect. At the same time, Winnie is something of a snob and is not without her faults, being, at times, quite arrogant herself. Having been born to a rich and powerful father, she has status and was raised with manners and a sense of decorum. She has much to learn from others, but she also feels that she has much to teach since she has been educated and can read and write. This is exchange of teaching and learning is illustrated through her relationships with Min and Hulan (Helen). As the story progresses, Winnie's innocence begins to fade away, and she becomes cynical of the world. And yet, she seems always to be the "little person" that Auntie Du had called

her with affection, not at all because of weakness but because she seems to have retained a certain amount of her optimism. Like her own mother, Winnie is always strong-willed, even if, at times, she had failed to stand up to her cruel husband. And, in the end, she is the mother that wants to take away her daughter's suffering and who is optimistic that she will be able to help her and that there will be some way to cure her.

In **The Kitchen God's wife,** Tan's second novel, shares many incidents with the life of her mother, Daisy Tan, who had escaped an abusive marriage to come to the United States. In short, Winnie is like The Kitchen God's Wife who had to endure a great deal of suffering. But Winnie is never a "victim," in fact she is a giving "creator," as is seen at the end through her creation of a new deity, which she gives to her daughter, symbolically offering Pearl her own open ears and heart.

The Kitchen God's wife also is a feminist retelling of The Kitchen God's story. In the original story, the focus is on the Kitchen God, who also is not only forgiven but also rewarded for his bad behavior, while his wife is an unnamed figure who never speaks and whose suffering is never re dressed. In contrast, The Kitchen God's wife allows the abused wife to tell her own story. □

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Attention Please

The January - June 2012 issue will be a special issue on Manoj Das, the famous Indo-English story-teller. Persons interested to submit papers (hard and soft copy) specially on Manoj Das may send to the editor by the end of March 2012.

Sd/- U.N. Majhi
Editor

Amitav Ghosh's **The Hungry Tide** ¾ an Ecocritic Novel

* Dr. P. Kolappadhas

Amitav Ghosh, one among the few intellectual writers of Indian English Literature, fictionalizes a sensitive fact, displacement of animal beings and human beings or displacement of human beings and animal beings in a fine balancing narrative in **The Hungry Tide**. In this novel, he endeavours to place the silenced voices of the settlers and the natural fauna of the 10,000 square kilometers Sundarbans in the lime light.

Ghosh takes a historical event, the eviction of refugee settlers from the Morichjhapi Island in the Sundarbans by the left Front government of west Bengal in 1979 that forms a sad undercurrent of the narrative, to focus his concerns for the ecology. In 1978, a group of Bangladeshi refugees settled in the Dandakaranya camp in Madya Pradesh, migrated to the Morichjhapi Island to live there permanently.

The setting of the novel, the Sundarbans is a vast, intermittently submerged archipelago, largely covered by thick mangrove forests in the delta where the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna meet the bay of Bengal. The narrative draws Kanai Dutt, a middle aged linguist who runs a Translation bureau in Delhi, an Indian origin American cetologist Piyali Roy, Kanai's uncle Nirmal, aunt Nilima, Kusum, her son Fokir and Horen together in Lusibari, a fictional island in the Sundarbans. Though these characters represent entirely different spheres, they are thrown in to Lusibari forming an admixture of a general whole like that of the ecosystem of the Sundarbans.

In the words of Ghosh, Kanai "Although unmarried, he was, as he liked to say, rarely single: over the last many years, several women had drifted in and out of his life" (16). Like the Sundarbans, which is a conglomeration of a number of islands, the life of Kanai is a confluence of many women. As the water drifts in and out, women also come in and go out of Kanai's life. Piya, the cetologist with her scientific quest "…appeared to be a case in point", because.." it was that opportunities often appeared unexpectedly"(16). Piya visits the Sundarbans to study the fresh water dolphins. Nirmal and Nilima settled in the Lusibari island thirty years back where Nirmal is a school master and Nilima does social

service with her NGO run by her trust for the cause of the islanders.

Ghosh's concern for the ecosystem gets revealed through Nirmal when he questions, "whose is this land, nature's or man's?" Indeed a difficult question to answer. In the Sundarbans both are at threat, the human beings with their settlements stand as a perennial threat to the unique diversity of aquatic and terrestrial life in the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. There is a hectic depletion of aquatic species by fishing and travel. Nirmal says to Kanai: "And on some of the rivers you'll find more boats than there are trucks on the Grand Trunk Road" (17). The human beings are equally at threat. The forest with its tigers, the crocodiles, the tide and the flooding by storm-waters are a constant threat to human beings: "Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles" (8).

Interestingly, a close reading of the text reveals that the narrative of the novel is closely knitted with ecological concerns and the plot grows out of the natural characteristics of the numerous islands of the Sundarbans. The Government in its effort to evict the settlers from the Morichjhapi Island announces: "This Island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world" (261).

The commonality shared by the people of these islands and the flora and fauna is that nothing is certain in their lives. And the conflict between the animal species and the human beings is crossing borders, though there are no borders. Ghosh writes:

> *There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea. The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometers inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater only to re-emerge hours later. The currents are so powerful as to reshape the islands almost daily ¾ some days the water tears away entire promontories and peninsulas; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbanks where there were none before. When the tides create new land, overnight mangroves begin to gestate, and if the conditions, are right they can spread so fast as to cover a new island within a few short years. (7)*

The Sundarbans is a unique place of study for Piya as it is a place where fresh water dolphins live. Two species of river dolphins are known to inhabit these waters ¾ the Gangetic dolphin and the Irrawaddy dolphin (Orcaella brevirostris). Hence the Sundarbans is a habitat of some rare species which slowly dwindles. This virgin land of peculiar ecosystem was serene and fertile

till Sir Daniel Hamilton, a Scotsman set eyes on this beautiful land. From then the land of the flora and fauna has changed to the land of the human beings.

> Standing on deck, his eyes drink in these vast rivers, these mudflats,
> these mangrove-covered islands and it occurs to him to ask, "Why
> does no one live here? Why are these islands empty of people? Why
> is this valuable soil allowed to lie fallow?" (50)

Greg Garrard writes in Ecocriticism (2007): "From the fifteenth century onwards, new territories discovered by European explorers were granted to national Governments and their agents by charters, patents and Papal Bulls, with little concern for the rights of indigenous peoples" (164).

The point to be noted here is that it has been the habit of the Europeans to explore new lands by which the native inhabitants and the wild life are destroyed along with the ecosystem.

Formerly people were satisfied with showing their concern for the indigenous people, having no concern for the flora and fauna. But the ecology of a place is alive only with the flora and fauna and human beings are the only living organisms that damage the ecology. However, now thanks to eco-criticism and awareness on the ecosystem, people have started to think of the animal beings. Greg Garrard further writes about the claims of Vandana Shiva in Biopiracy (1998), "… that this colonial appropriation of land by means of legal instruments, which led to the domination, enslavement or extermination of non-Europeans in the populated continents, has a modern counterpart in the patents on genetically engineered organisms granted by courts in the developed world and assiduously protected by the WTO". (Ecocriticism 164-64).

In the Sundarbans also it was Sir Daniel who gave islands, the names of his relations ¾ Jamespur, Annpur, Emilybari, Lusibari, etc and paved way for human settlements, thereby slowly spoiling the ecosystem. In the narrative also we see the American young lady Piya who visits the Sundarbans to study the freshwater dolphins. Though the Forest Department people did not permit her to move on her own, she steals her way with the help of Fokir, the fisherman into the waterfront. Ultimately Fokir gets killed by the cyclone while protecting her from the danger.

Hence, it is clear that before this venture of Sir Daniel,

> No one ¾ in the beginning. Remember, at that time there was nothing but forest here. There were no people, no embankments, no fields.

> Just… mud and mangrove. At high tide most of the land vanished under water. And everywhere you looked there were predators ¾ tigers, crocodiles, sharks, leopards.
>
> So why did people come, then?
>
> For the land…What else? This was at a time when people were so desperate for land that they were willing to sell themselves in exchange for a *bigha* or two. (51)

This desire for land is actually an encroachment of the land that is supposed to be the undisputed territory of animals. Here in the Sundarbans also the settlers became the feast for the tigers, crocodiles and snakes that lived in the creeks. They killed hundreds of people. Ultimately Sir Daniel began to give out rewards to anyone who killed a tiger or crocodile.

The people settled in Lusibari and the other similar islands were mainly of farming stock who were lured by the promise of free farm-land. Naturally, to earn their daily bread they ventured to hunting and fishing. In this process of hard living "Many died of drowning, and many more were picked off by crocodiles and estuarine sharks" (79). Hence loss of human life, especially of male members led many women as widows. In Ghosh's words, "Within a few weeks of her arrival in Lusibari, Nilima noticed that a startlingly large proportion of the island's women were dressed as widows" (80). Still worse is that even though these widows could remarry, in the tide country it was not possible because men of marriageable age were few. Therefore widowhood here often meant a lifetime of dependence and years of abuse and exploitation.

Another point that Ghosh records is that the role of minor organisms in the upkeep of the ecosystem is crucial and that cannot be ignored. He maintains that crabs are a more relevant species in the mangrove forests as in other landscapes. He writes:

> They were a sanitation department and a janitorial team rolled into one: they kept the mangroves alive by removing their leaves and litter; without them the trees would choke on their own debris. Didn't they represent some fantastically large proportion of the system's biomass? Didn't they outweigh even the trees and the leaves? Hadn't someone said that intertidal forests should be named after crabs rather than mangroves since it was they ¾ certainly not the crocodile or the tiger or the dolphin ¾ who were the keystone species of the entire ecosystem? (142)

It is not that the animal species face threat from the human beings alone. Natural calamities also take toll on the animals, especially in the tide country. The author describes the worst hit storm which sent huge wave as tall as twelve meter in height. The waters rose so high killing thousands of animals

and carried them upriver and farther inland. “The corpses of tigers and rhinoceroses were found kilometers from the river, in rice fields and in village ponds. There were fields covered with the feathers of dead birds” (204).

Nirmal Bose, the schoolmaster supports the cause of settlement in the Morichjhapi Island whereas his wife, Nilima does not do so though her work is social service. All of a sudden thousands of refugees from Bangladesh, settled in Madhya Pradesh occupied the whole island overnight. Within a very short duration the settlers turned the whole island a perfect dwelling:

> Salt pans had been created, tube wells had been planted, water had been dammed for the rearing of fish, a bakery had started up, boat-builders had set up workshops, a pottery had been founded as well as an ironsmith’s shop; there were people making boats while others were fashioning nets and crab lines; little marketplaces, where all kinds of goods were being sold, had sprung up. All this in the space of a few months! It was an astonishing spectacle – as though an entire civilization had sprouted suddenly in the mud. (190-91)

Nirmal with his Marxist leaning gives importance to human beings and hence favours settlement in the island: “They’re human beings; they need medical attention as much as people do anywhere else” (213). Whereas, Nilima evaluates things and values the Government views. Nirmal’s view is that human beings should be superior to the animal beings. But the Government has declared the Sundarbans a Tiger Reserve in 1973, a National park in 1984, World Heritage Site in 1985 and a Biosphere in 1989. It is also the habitat of the largest number of tigers living in the wild. Hence, in this context, Ghosh’s glaring question posed throughout the novel becomes more valuable. This is perhaps general and unique question fit to the Third World nations. Lawrence Buell’s question in this respect is much relevant: “If you care for the environment, does that mean that you don’t care about the plight of human beings, especially impoverished people?” (The Environmental Imagination 80).

Therefore, when the Government wants to protect the natural forests, it cannot be taken for granted that it undermines the human beings. Nilima answers Nirmal that the government’s view has to be respected: “Those people are squatters; that land doesn’t belong to them; it’s government property. How can they just seize it? If they’re allowed to remain, people will think every island in the tide country can be seized. What will become of the forest, the environment?” (213). Naturally, this is the mighty problem the whole world faces today. When human beings started to encroach the forest lands the size of the natural forests shrank leading to loss of vegetation, soil erosion, global warming and depletion in the ozone.

These are the consequent characteristics of industrialization. The European concept of industrialization has given rise to economic development, no doubt. However, it never bothered about the negative impact of it. Fertile lands were converted into industrial areas leading to felling of trees, blocking of the natural course of the water-flow depriving ground water surplus, increased amount of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and other poisonous emissions. Economic development has made men consumers. Consumerism has its own impact on the ecosystem. Just a single example would suffice to explain the impact. Consumerism causes the wasteful use of energy and material far above and beyond that needed for everyday living at a comfortable level. The raw materials and energy that go into the goods and services consumed over an individual's lifetime is so huge that, it certainly leads to the environmental imbalance. When this cost is multiplied out over the lifespan of families, cities and countries, the proportions are incredible.

Similarly, larger attitude of consumerism has brought in larger amount of waste material. It is heartening to imagine the amount of plastic materials alone thrown out every day. Millions of tons of plastic cans, plastic papers and plastic wrappers are thrown out daily. The amount of other waste materials adds millions of tons. Waste material management has become a tremendous task in all nations. And the developed nations, especially the U.S.A has started to use the third world countries as a dumping ground of their waste materials. Aspirin based medicines and many other banned drugs from the USA are sold to developing nations as a means of making profit as well as throwing away the banned items. Recent newspaper reports about the dumping of ship loads of wastes from developed nations into the seas of the developing nations are alarming. This sort of making the waterfronts as dumping grounds, slowly but steadily has affected the richness of the soil making it unfriendly to the flora and fauna.

In **The Hungry Tide,** Nirmal too laments the condition of the Sundarbans. He recollects how the Sundarbans (beautiful forest) appeared thirty years before when he first landed on Lusibari:

> I remembered how when I first came to Lusibari, the sky would be darkened by birds at sunset. Many years had passed since I'd seen such flights of birds. When I first noticed their absence, I thought they would soon come back but they had not. I remembered time when at low tide, the mudbanks would turn scarlet with millions of swarming crabs. That colour began to fade long ago and now it is never seen any more. Where had they gone, I wondered, those millions of swarming crabs, those birds?.... but in this place that I had lived in for

almost thirty years. The birds were vanishing, the fish were dwindling and from day to day the land was being reclaimed by the sea. What would it take, to submerge the tide country? Not much ¾ a minuscule change in the level of the sea would be enough. (215)

Piya's observations are also the same:

It's known for sure that these waters once had large populations of marine mammals. What's happened to them then? There seems to have been some sort of drastic change in the habitat said Piya. Some kind of dramatic deterioration... When marine mammals begin to disappear from an established habitat it means something's gone very very wrong. (266-67)

In the tide country, Sundarbans, why the killing of human beings by tigers is so high when it is compared with other parts is also noteworthy. Nilima showed Kanai the figure of number of people killed by tigers in lower Bengal in a six-year period ¾ between the years 1860 and 1866 which was compiled by J.Fayrer, the English naturalist who coined the phrase "Royal Bengal Tiger". 4218 people were killed ¾ almost two people every day, for six years. The reason for this killing is vital in issues of ecology. Nilima explains:

… the tide country's tigers were different from those elsewhere. In other habitats, tigers only attacked human beings in abnormal circumstances: if they happened to be crippled or were otherwise unable to hunt down any other kind of prey. But this was not true of the tide country's tigers; even young and healthy animals were known to attack human beings. Some said that this propensity came from the peculiar conditions of the tidal ecology, in which large parts of the forest were subjected to daily submersions. The theory went that this raised the animals' threshold of aggression by washing away their scent markings and confusing their territorial instincts. (241)

People always forget the fact that human beings can be settled anywhere whereas the flora and the fauna that uphold the ecology cannot be settled so. Protecting wild life does not mean ignoring the people who are dying. More important, as what Piya says, that preserving the species

… is that it was what was *intended*- not by you or me, but by nature, by the earth, by the planet that keeps us all alive. Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that prevents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves. What'll be left then?... And do you think it'll stop at that? Once we decide we can kill off other species, it'll be people next exactly the kind of people you're thinking of, people who're poor and unnoticed. (301)

So far earth is the only planet where human beings, animals and natural

vegetation can survive and co-exist. It is the natural order. If man does not care about the existence of a species and go antagonistic towards it, the ultimatum would be loss of that particular species. Extinction of species would certainly lead to ecological imbalance. Greg Garrard argues "…anthropogenic extinction are thought to have risen rapidly in the last 200 years from an estimated loss rate of one species per year (already 100 times the natural background rate) at the turn of the nineteenth century, largely as a result of extensive destruction of biologically rich tropical rainforests and coral reefs" (Ecocriticism 155). Garrard further cites the conclusions made by Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin that "…evolution operates most obviously in the biological isolation afforded by islands…. a single ancestor species, arriving or becoming isolated on the island in the past, could evolve by natural selection into a variety of different species… (Ecocriticism 155).

Ghosh cites examples of the dwindling population of freshwater dolphins. He writes that the once abundant population of freshwater dolphins in Cambodia's great freshwater lake had been reduced almost to extinction. These dolphins were hunted for their fat, the oil of which was used to run boats and motorcycles.

The vast and fragile ecosystem of the mangrove forests are home to a wide variety of interesting and virulent flora and fauna, any further encroachments would only sabotage the ecosystem that sustains this unique environment. The instinct of clearing species which are impediments to human beings will ultimately lead to mutual killing among human beings. Hence, loss of human lives by animals is only because of interfering into others' territory which can be solved easily by letting live mutually undisturbed. Thus Ghosh's **The Hungry Tide** highlights the importance of preserving the ecosystem, especially the island ecosystem which upkeeps the ecology of the universe as a whole. □

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Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* - A Feminist Perspective

* Sanjay M. Sathe

Monica Ali is a British writer of Bangladeshi origin. Ali was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh to a Bangladeshi father and English mother, on October 20, 1967. She came to England aged three years, her first home being Bolton in Greater Manchester, Her father was originally from the district of Mymensingh. She went to Bolton School and then studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Wadham College, Oxford. She lives in South London with her husband, Simon, a management consultant, and their two children, Felix and Shumi. She is the author of *Brick Lane* (2003), her debut novel, which was shortlisted for the 2003 Man Booker Prize for Fiction, and made into a film, released in 2007. Ali was also voted Granta's Best of Young British Novelists on the basis of the unpublished manuscript. Since the popular and critical success following its publication and the release of her two more novels, *Alentejo Blue* (2006), *In the Kitchen* (2009) and she has had the opportunity to prove her ability.

Brick Lane — named after Brick Lane, a street at the heart of London's Bangladeshi community — follows the life of Nazneen, a Bangladeshi woman who moves to Tower Hamlets in London at the age of 18 — her English consisting of "sorry" and "thank you" — to marry an older man, Chanu, twice her age. She has a hard time getting used to her new life, but tries to settle for an existence as a traditional wife and mother. Frustrated by his inability to lead a successful and 'English' life, Nazneen's husband, Chanu, tries to keep Nazneen indoors. To him, she is a part of his life he can control and an emblem of Bangladeshi culture. Nazneen tries to adapt to her situation, to obey her husband and be content, but a number of events in her life cause her to reflect upon her life and take more and more control of it. The birth of their girls Shahana and Bibi brings out the Canadian goose in Chanu's home. As he , feels that he is losing control over his wife and daughters, he decides that London life has a bad influence on their values and that the only way to save his family is to take them back to Bangladesh. He flaps around longing for home, vowing to ultimately return to his golden Bengal, the land of Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. He sees Bangladesh as a safer, more dignified place for his growing, nubile daughters than the country he has made his home for decades; a country that hasn't recognized his true worth, nor rewarded his years of constant service, and thus doesn't deserve his allegiance. This finally causes Nazneen to stand

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up against her husband for the first time.

The first person to get Nazneen thinking is her neighbor Razia, who is also Bangladeshi but much less traditional. She smokes, lets her children wear English clothes and tries to cook English food. Second important influences on Nazneen are her two daughters, Shahana and Bibi who inevitably grow up to be very English and are very critical of their parents' lifestyle. Thirdly, she meets Karim, a young man from the neighborhood who is also a political / religious activist and takes her to political meetings.

Parallel to Nazneen's life story is Hasina, Nazneen's sister. Her story unfolds through letters she sends to Nazneen. Hasina chose not to obey her parents and marry the man they picked for her. She eloped with someone she was in love with, but ends up even more miserable than Nazneen. As her lover leaves her, she tries to fend for herself working in factories. Left without the protection of a husband, Hasina is raped, then forced to become a prostitute to survive. Appalling things happen over the years. A baby dies, in spite of his mother's determination to save him. She has a friend whose husband drenches her in acid, having already done the same thing to a baby she would not give up for sale. More than one woman kills herself because her husband beats and humiliates her. Hasina recounts the terrible things that happen to her in letters of ineffable sweetness, generosity and unintentional hilarity. Ali does show how the choices that face the sister in Bangladesh are so much starker than Nazneen's - choices that determine Hasina's survival as well as her happiness. Hasina's letters are written in broken prose, since presumably she would write in her own language and her grasp of Bengali would be just as good as her sister's, but the limping rhythms of her sentences still work well, conveying her uncertain journey in and out of security.

At the heart of the book lies a marvellous depiction of an adulterous affair. As a good Bengali wife, Nazneen does not enter lightly into her sexual adventure, and her lover, Karim, a fierce young Muslim who wants to radicalize the local community, has deeply held beliefs against promiscuity. But as Karim comes to Nazneen's house day after day, bringing her the piecework for her sewing job, Ali shows how the physical attraction that explodes between them destroys their moral expectations. She captures all the little details of Karim's attractiveness to Nazneen, from the citrus scent of his shirts to his eager energy when discussing politics, until, long before their first kiss, you have been convinced by a sense of absolutely inexorable desire.

Nazneen could easily have been felled by loneliness and the feeling she has that 'hope and despair are nothing against the world and what it holds and what it holds for you'(). But although much of her life is an object lesson in passivity, her character is honed by experience, grows less soft around the

edges and turns out to be full of courage.

Nazneen is not a finished person when she arrives in London as a bride for Chanu. But she is eager to grow up. The relationships that Nazneen has with the women around her - her daughters and her best friend, Razia - are meant to be the ones that sustain her and bring her into a sense of true independence. Take one sharp moment where Nazneen finally plucks up courage to tell Razia about her affair, to find her deeply unimpressed: “Razia rolled her big bony shoulders. She was tired. Even her shoulders were too heavy for her today. ‘In love,’ she said, ‘It is the English style’.”

From the moment of her birth in a village hut surrounded by paddy fields in then East Pakistan, Nazneen is left to her fate. Born blue, assumed dead, Nazneen surprises her mother, her aunt, and the old midwife by letting loose a loud howl of life. And still her mother, Rupban, refuses to do anything to aid her recovery. Let fate take its course. If fate decides this child of hers should live, then she would live. If it decides she would die then running with her to a distant hospital and paying for expensive treatment would be in vain. “My child must not waste any energy fighting against fate. That way she will be stronger.

The story of her birth becomes the *leitmotif* of Nazneen’s life. She clings to it and lives by her mother’s belief that in all events she must accept the Grace of God for what cannot be changed must be borne. Her younger sister, Hasina, beautiful and wilful, does not bear the burden of this belief. Where Nazneen is fatalistic and stoic, Hasina fights tooth and nail against the adversity that so firmly has her in its grasp. While Nazneen’s destiny takes her to Tower Hamlets in London, Hasina’s transports her to Dhaka where she struggles to make a living with difficulty

Nazneen finds herself a in a ghetto distanced from British society by her identity as a Muslim woman. Those she left behind consider her lucky. Doesn’t she have a proper concrete home with beds and cupboards and armchairs and mirrors and other things that bring happiness and prosperity? Isn’t her husband kind and understanding and generous and educated? For all intents and purposes, Nazneen’s fate is serving her well. Yet in occasional moments of discontent, she allows herself the indulgence of bitter asides about her cloistered life, her husband’s eccentricities, and the strange wisdom of religion. She goes with destiny’s flow until the birth of her son, when she decides to take some control, but circumstances sling her back into indifference. Destiny obviously has other plans.

Meanwhile, Hasina continues to be buffeted on the ocean of her destiny, going from one bad patch to another, being rescued and rescuing others. Her life is fraught with disappointments and she writes to her sister about them. Nazneen sends her money whenever she can and dreams of bringing Hasina to

London, away from the horrors of her life in Dhaka. She also dreams of skating like Torville and Dean, slicing through ice in a skin-hugging outfit, in the arms of a tall, graceful partner; the sublimation of a growing desire to moult her identity like an old skin and don a new one.

Beyond the moving portrait of the domestic world, *Brick Lane* is a novel in which the politics of our times are caught with such easy vividness. So many novelists either ignore politics altogether, or else they treat politics as journalists do, by making arguments rather than creating situations. But here, everything political that the characters say or do seems to spring from their own hopes and disappointments, so that - even when they are reacting to September 11 or the Oldham riots - it never feels as if Ali is simply using them to illustrate a point. Particularly impressive are the precisely observed descriptions of the meetings of Karim's group of local Muslims, the "Bengal Tigers", where girls in headscarves and boys in Nike fleeces argue about whether they should engage with global jihad or local injustices.

As she sits in those meetings, Nazneen first of all burns with silent admiration for Karim and his impressive certainty about his place in life, but gradually she comes to realize that her lover's dreams of Islamic renaissance may turn out to be as flimsy as Chanu's dreams of integration. And so she begins to grow beyond her first love: "She had looked at him and seen only his possibilities. Now she looked again and saw that the disappointments of his life, which would shape him, had yet to happen."

The novel caused controversy within the Bangladeshi community in Britain because of what certain groups perceived as negative portrayal of people from the Sylhet region. The majority of Bangladeshis living in ***Brick Lane*** are originally from Sylhet. (Ali is from Dhaka.) . Activists intended to burn copies of Ali's book during a rally to be held on July 30, 2006, but the demonstration passed without incident. Parts of the community were opposed to plans by Ruby Films to film parts of the novel in the Brick Lane area, and formed the campaign against Monica Ali's film Brick Lane". The film, starring well-known Indian actress Tannishtha Chatterjee, was successfully made and distributed both in the UK and internationally. Germaine Greer expressed support for the campaign, writing that:

As British people know little and care less about the Bangladeshi people in their midst, their first appearance as characters in an English novel had the force of a defining caricature ... Some of the Sylhetis of ***Brick Lane*** did not recognize themselves. Bengali Muslims smart under an Islamic prejudice that they are irreligious and disorderly, the impure among the pure, and here was a proto-Bengali writer with a Muslim name, portraying them as all of that

and more.

Greer further criticized Monica Ali's lack of authenticity and misrepresentation on the grounds that the author had never spent any considerable length of time in Brick Lane, and could not even speaks the Bengali language fluently any longer. Greer's involvement has angered some within the British literary community. Salman Rushdie has called it 'philistine, sanctimonious, and disgraceful, but ... not unexpected'.

Brick Lane is a tenderly wrought story of the two sisters whose destinies take them down different roads in different lands. With compassion and gentle humour, Ali writes perceptively about the Bengali diaspora in Britain. Whether Muslim or Hindu, Bengalis share a culture that she describes to perfection. She opens a window onto the world of the deracinated and, as a counterpoint, onto the life of those left behind in an impoverished, Islamic homeland. Neither life is easy. In fact sometimes it is downright unbearable. And yet it must be lived. Nazneen treats life "with the same indifference with which it … treats her", until one wonders if she will ever shrug off her passivity. Hasina, on the other hand, warms her life with rays of optimism until one wonders where she finds such infinite strength.

The overarching theme of fate, and the possibility of challenging it, is signaled in the epigraphs that cite Ivan Turgenev and Heraclitus. The quotation from Turgenev, for example, invites a consideration of powerlessness and the loss of self: 'Sternly, remorselessly, fate guides each of us; only at the beginning, when we're absorbed in details, in all sorts of nonsense, in ourselves, are we unaware of its harsh hand.' In Michael Gorra's review for the *New York Times*, he proposes that this negotiation with fate imbues the novel with a complexity that stretches beyond simplistic binary oppositions: 'Do we, can we, control our own lives? That question propels Ali's book, in a way that keeps us from reducing it to a simple matter of "East" versus "West"' (7 September 2003). *Brick Lane* also avoids such simplifications through its postcolonial critique of imperialism and Englishness. It is within this framework that independence, in terms of human and national identities, is preferred.

Brick Lane, is a document of Bangladeshi immigrants, their new lives, particularly those of women. It is a painful and funny tale of British Asians. Throughout the book, there is a persistent undertow of back home. The characters are defined by being Bangladeshi years after they have left. It is an epic saga about a Bangladeshi family living in the UK, and explores the British immigrant experience. It is set in the eponymous area of East London and switches occasionally to Bangladesh. The novel's main character, Nazneen, is herself one of Britain's new faces. But Nazneen and her compatriots are stranded in London without the benefits of belonging to a superpower big beyond its

britches. They are more vulnerable, more likely to be reborn by their immigration, or, else, to fail. For Nazneen, understanding her experience in London as a rebirth is not the tired metaphor. What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. London isn't home, not for Nazneen., and even less for Chanu,who plans to go back to Bangladesh. When he sees his elder daughter Shahana, start to grow into her tight jeans, he begins to plan the family's return,to the Dhaka his children have never seen. He belongs to a recognizable tradition, and so does *Brick Lane*. It has everything: richly complex characters, a gripping story and an exploration of a community that is so quintessentially British. In fact, *Brick Lane* most resembles isn't Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* but Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*. A similarly naturalistic account of immigrant life. And behind Ali and Mo, one feels the enabling weight of the nineteenth century of history of novels about people cut off from their origins, adrift in Europe's great cities. Ali has spun magic with the enthusiasm of an empathetic writer, creating the sounds, smells and sights of life as a Bengali. As part Bengali self, she recognizes familiar traits in the cameo characters that pepper the book — from eccentricity, ego and hypocrisy, to tenderness, self-sacrifice and sensuality. Ali has caught the nuances of subliminal, sub-continental, marital strife, Chanu's arrogance and hubris, and Nazneen's timidity, fatalism, and increasing forays into self-determination. And she paints a memorable portrait of the growing rebellion among second generation Bangladeshi Brits struggling with their identity, as do immigrants the world over. The story doesn't lose momentum at point in the novel. In a brilliant dénouement, Nazneen takes control with a quiet pronouncement that has the same effect as the yowl she let out when she was left for dead at birth — the right to life. The book ends on a high note as the main protagonist is born again. □

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INDIAN FOLKLORE AND MODERN THEATRE

* Dr. Tuta Eswar Rao

The traditional theatres such as *Yakshagana, Tamasha, Rasalila, Nautanki, Bhavai, Jatra*, and *Khyal* have gone through a remarkable revival since Independence.The rediscovery of folk theatre had in fact heightened the sense of a rural-urban cultural dichotomy among the educated elite. In this paper an attempt has been made to study how three prominent Indian Playwrights – Vijay Tendulkar, GirishKarnad and BadalSarkar have used the folkloristic traditions in their works.

According to the Indian view of life, the purpose of Drama and theatre was to create a feeling of pleasure or bliss (*Rasa*) by delineating different situations, mental status and feelings of human beings. The purpose of western drama on the other hand, was to reveal the struggles of life in their various forms.[1]**(Endnotes)**

In the last three decades or so, a new interest in regional cultural expressions and folklore has developed in India, leading to the rediscovery and reevaluation of indigenous forms of literature and the performing arts. Nowhere is this more apparent than in theatre. The traditional theatres such as *Yakshagana, Tamasha, Rasalila, Nautanki, Bhavai, Jatra*, and *Khyal* have gone through a remarkable revival since Independence. Considered decadent

and largely forgotten during colonial days, these regional theatres have recently received attention and a certain amount of governmental support from the national and state SangeetNatakAkademis. Their status has been enhanced by an intellectual reappraisal which views them as the surviving fragments of the ancient Sanskrit dramatic tradition, on the basis of common features such as preliminary rituals, stylized acting and gestures, stock characters like the stage director *(sutradhara)* and clown *(vidushaka),* and abundant song and dance. Through annual festivals held in the national and state capitals, folk theatre groups from all over India have performed for urban audiences, and scholars have been attracted to study the traditions. As a result, greater familiarity with folk theatre forms has developed in the cities, and the urban attitude has shifted from scorn to curiosity and respect.[2]

Intellectual interest in folk theatre started in the late fifties and early sixties in India. The studies of BalwantGargi[3] and Jagdish Chandra Mathur[4] were basically descriptive, documenting aspects of stagecraft in the different regions and comparing them in a general way. The vitality of rural theatre was widely acknowledged, as by Nissim Ezekiel in the April 1962 issue of *Seminar* focusing on theatre.[5] But although many contributors to this issue spoke of the need for synthesis with urban theatre, none gave examples of specific attempts. At this time, the urban and rural streams still flowed separately.

The rediscovery of folk theatre had in fact heightened the sense of a rural-urban cultural dichotomy among the educated elite. Urban theatre was perceived more and more as imitative of the West and non-Indian, while the term rural was acquiring the prestigious connotation of "indigenous." BadalSircar,[6] the noted Bengali playwright, expressed this clearly:

Theatre is one of the fields where this [rural-urban] dichotomy is manifested most. The city theatre today is not a natural development of the traditional or folk theatre in the urban setting as it should have been. It is rather a new theatre having its base on Western theatre . . . , whereas the traditional village theatre has retained most of its indigenous characteristics.

As a result, some dramatists began to reject Western influence and urge a return to village culture and traditions. The Urdu playwright HabibTanvir[7] stated:

It is in its villages that the dramatic tradition of India in all its pristine glory and vitality remains preserved even to this day. It is these rural drama groups that require real encouragement... it is not until the city youth is fully exposed to the influence of folk traditions in theatre that a truly Indian theatre, modern and universal in appeal and indigenous in form, can really be evolved.

By the early seventies, playwrights and directors had begun to incorporate folk

conventions and ideas into their productions. Heightened awareness of rural forms was feeding back into the creative process, providing new resources for self-expression. In the Round Table on the Contemporary Relevance of Traditional Theatre, organized by the SangeetNatakAkademi in 1971, complex questions were posed, such as the relation of rural forms to modern values, the role of the urban author vis-à-vis an unfamiliar regional genre, and the reaction of the urban audience. But the conference's basic assumption was unchallenged, namely that "as creative artists we have to confront the traditional, especially in our case where tradition is a continuous living vital force".[8] These discussions made it clear that the manner in which traditional and urban theatres were to be integrated depended very much upon the sensibility of the individual playwright or director.

To illustrate some of the possibilities, we can cite the efforts of three well-known figures who have experimented with folk forms, Vijay Tendulkar, GirishKarnad, and BadalSircar. Tendulkar's Marathi play *Sari Ga Sari* wasfirst produced in Bombay in 1964. In writing the play, Tendulkar utilized the *Tamasha* form and its characteristic language patterns. Tendulkar was particularly interested in capturing the feeling of spontaneity of *Tamasha*, and he discovered that the urban actors he used lacked the informality and improvisational skills of traditional actors. This problem highlighted for him one of the major differences between urban and rural theatre: the urban play depends upon the playwright, while in folk theatre, the actor is all-important.

Another approach can be seen in GirishKarnad's play *Hayavadana,* written originally in Kannada in the early 1970's.[9] Based on the tale of transposed heads from the *Kathasaritsagara, Hayavadana*is a symbolic drama employing several conventions of *Yakshagana*, such as the half-curtain which is carried onstage to introduce new characters, and the *Bhagavata* or narrator, who introduces the story and comments on the action throughout the play. The structure of the play as a whole, however, is not derived from any particular regional tradition, and its philosophical exploration of the problems of wholeness and identity has a decidedly modern orientation. Different productions have brought out more or less of the folk flavor. B.V. Karanth's Hindi version in Delhi maximized conventions such as masks for the main characters, a folk style of costuming, and music and songs based on folk tunes, while RajinderNath's Calcutta production largely eliminated the folk element.[10]

Indian folk theatre, according to Madan Mohan Bhalla, is operatic and provincial. He rightly observed as early as the 1960s, that "the folk theatre in India is the most elastic form of theatre expression, incorporating pageantry, dance, mime, song, caricature, lampoon, ritual, ceremonial; decorative arts and crafts, in fact everything that has become a way of life of the people. Its

ultimate aim is to reaffirm or demonstrate folk beliefs".[11] But he asserted that folk form couldn't become the working model for *the* Modern Indian Theatre precisely because of its folk elements. The fetish for the folk form began during the very decade in which Bhalla's essay was published. Dramatists like GirishKarnad, Chandrasekhar Kambar, HabibTanvir, and others, popularised Indian folk theatre with their own diverse theatrical practices. Consequently, recent studies on Indian theatre celebrate the folk theatre as an alternative theatre, as opposed to the enclosed proscenium theatre, which upholds European realism. For instance, AparnaBhargavaDharwadker in her path breaking work, *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947* (2005) contests the concept of a single representative Indian theatre and foregrounds plurality in the Indian dramatic scenario by theorising the idea of Indian "theatres." Folk theatre claims a considerable space in the collective whole of heterogeneous Indian theatres. Dharwadker clarifies the paradoxical category of folk in India:

The political conception of folk theatre as a people's theatre evokes in part the European Enlightenment definition of 'folk' as 'the people.' But in India it also points to the popular appeal of village forms, their potential for subversive social meaning, and their connection with various forms of populist street theatre. The folk repertoire thus appears as a historical legacy as well as a powerful resource in the present.[12]

Folk theatre invariably falls within the broad gamut of the post-colonial theatre. Post-colonial theatre is mostly, if not always, acutely political; and in its domain, the cultural groups which had been rendered silent and invisible are endowed with speech and presence. According to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, post-colonial drama, "respond[s] to the experience of imperialism, whether directly or indirectly… [and] interrogate[s] the hegemony that underlies imperial representation".[13]

A more radical avenue is represented by BadalSircar's movement toward a "Third Theatre," which he conceived as a theatre of rural-urban synthesis. Sircar's goals were to abolish the proscenium arch stage, to emphasize physical movement of the actors over words, and to rely upon only the simplest techniques of lighting, costuming and staging, emulating Grotowski's Poor Theatre – all to build up the immediacy of communication between actors and audience.[14] His 1973 Calcutta production of *Spartacus,* based on the story of a Roman slave revolt, incorporated these elements. The actors moved in groups around clusters of spectators, no sets or properties were used, and most of the action was conveyed through physical exercises learned during long training sessions by the troupe members. Music was limited to a single refrain sung by the group of slaves without instrumental accompaniment.[15][15]Ibid., pp. 53-60

~~This mode of presentation relied on none of the conventions of rural~~

theatre, but it was aimed at establishing within an urban context the same sense of communal involvement and ritualistic action often found in folk theatre.

These examples indicate some of the ways in which rural theatre traditions may influence a playwright. He may attempt to write within the stylistic frame of the folk genre while exploring contemporary themes, as Tendulkar did. He may adopt particular stage conventions, like Karnad, which need not be restricted to one specific regional tradition, thus increasing the appeal of the play to a wider audience. Or he may imitate rural theatre in general principles only, following Sircar, and work towards rejecting all convention and inventing his own minimal performance environment. □

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Jhumpa Lahiri's "Women" in ***Unaccustomed Earth***

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Jhumpa Lahiri's ***Unaccustomed Earth*** is a collection of short stories followed by a novella containing three sections centring around Hema and Koushik. The epigraph, taken from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Custom House*, suggests that uprooted beings flourish more in unaccustomed earth. In fact, this is a popular belief among the residents of the third world countries. Many Indians migrate every year either to US or to UK in search of opportunities, comfort and money. What Hawthorne writes: "Human nature will not flourish... if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children ... shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth."(Epigraph, Jhumpa Lahiri, 2008) This is an apt metaphor of the present. But after going through the first five stories of this collection, I feel that the author is sceptical about the message of the epigraph. She has incorporated it at the very beginning to indicate the irony contained in the message. The irony reveals itself through the stories, where we come in contact with more than eight Bengali-American and American women of different ages ranging from teenage to middle age. In spite of hailing from different cultural backgrounds, their behavioural pattern is too some extent very similar. Only the colour of the complexion and the language are different. Apart from which they form the image of "archetypes". They are either mother or sister or lover or companion and they are very much committed to their social roles. What is remarkable is that the writer's concern for her women characters goes beyond the cultural and geographical territories of country and class and creates a multi-cultural platform, where all the female characters meet and share their emotion with one another.

Lahiri, in her stories, has dealt with some of the basic feminine issues like insecurity, jealousy, hatred and vulnerability leading to loneliness. These are the fundamental existential crises in women of all countries and ages. My focus is textual and I have deliberately shunned the major postmodern literary theories in search of a form now disappearing, the pure literary criticism.

The female protagonists of this collection are from a very humble background. Some are housewives and some are mediocre professionals and

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all of them belong to the middle rung of the set up. They do not question or challenge the status-quo. They believe in love, marital bliss, peace and security. The author is dealing with various types of female experiences as projected by her characters. My stress is on the psyche of Ruma, Usha, Deborah, Megan, Sudha, Sangita and Deirdre. “The author has allowed these women to grow unguided as if she were accompanying them through the espalier of her narration”. (Web) All these women project their yearnings, love and latent desires in a very subtle manner. They suffer silently. They never boast of their feelings. “Culture Shock” is not a fundamental issue in these stories. There are references to it at some places but the central focus is not on the dichotomy of the east and the west. The first five stories entitled “Unaccustomed Earth”, “Hell and heaven”, “A choice of Accommodations”, “Only Goodness” and “Nobody’s Business” deal with the issues of femininity and problems of relationships.

In “Hell and Heaven”, Pranob Chakroborty is a love interest of a married Bengali woman and an American student called Deborah. Usha, the teenage daughter of that middle aged Bengali woman referred to as “Boudi”, is aware of her mother’s adulterous love. But she is too young to react to it. Unlike her mother, she loves Deborah and continuously tries to protect her from her mother’s wrath and jealousy by being extremely nice to her. Her mother is not courageous enough to reveal her love for Pronob before everybody so she tries to commit suicide, which does not materialize finally. On the other hand, the bond between Deborah and Usha transcends the barriers of age and culture and they become foil to each other’s personality.

Megan, in “A Choice of Accommodations”, is a medical professional, paired against a Bengali doctor called Amit. In spite of her beauty, success and youth, she cannot drive away her sense of insecurity. She is insecure about Pam, Amit’s childhood crush. After many years of their marriage, they attend Pam’s reception in Langford. There Megan gets defensive and behaves clumsily. However there should not be any question of insecurity as Amit had been a very protective father and husband all these years. This is an instance of feminine insecurity, which lurks in the subconscious. At one place she says: “What about Pam? ... something passed between you too, it’s obvious”. (Jhumpa Lahiri, 2008, 125)

Sudha in “Only Goodness” is insecure too like Megan, but it is combined with an element of helplessness and shame. She is helpless about her self-destructive alcoholic brother Rahul and she wants to keep her family away from him. Finally she rejects Rahul instead of taking him to any de-addiction centre. Sudha’s sense of shame is on the surface in the story.

Sangita and Deirdre do not have any sense of shame or insecurity or jealousy. But they are very vulnerable and both of them become victims of an Egyptian’s

lust. Vulnerability and love make them easy prey to Farouk and these two women suffer intensely and Sangita behaves hysterically at the end.

In the second part, we encounter Hema, who grows up in the three sections of the novella. “Once in a Lifetime” is Hema’s account fraught with tension, insecurity, love and dilemma. Things are seen from the perspectives of an adolescent girl, who speaks less and observes a lot. “Going Ashore” is the concluding section of the novella, where Hema is grown up and meets her long lost companion Koushik in Italy. She turns down Koushik’s proposal of marriage and accepts her parents’ choice, Navin. She subjugates her love to obey her parents. It is again her sense fear that holds her back. She does not want to be an uprooted creature like Koushik. Instead, she prefers a secured corner and she also yearns to be protected by her relatives. And therefore, she makes a compromise with the tradition of arranged marriage and gets back to her root in Kolkata.

For Ruma, in **Unaccustomed Earth**, life is a void. In spite of being a lawyer, leaves her job for her family. When her father pleads her to take up at least a part time job in a firm, she replies: “I am working, Baba. Soon I’ll be taking care of two children, just like Ma did”. (Jhumpa Lahiri, 2008, 36) There is also a sense of fatigue in her. She just sails on in a set pattern of domestic chores. She is not ready to accept any challenge or change.

If we just leave aside the theories and hackneyed theme of diaspora, we may still find in Lahiri a very interesting writer dealing with the basics of femininity—jealousy, insecurity, vulnerability and psychological debility. Her women characters are very weak and disempowered just because of their unassertive nature, timidity and sacrificial gestures. It seems as if they are all self-less creatures, who annihilate their desires for the sake of others. They fail to make their presence felt in an “unaccustomed earth” far away from India.□

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Portrayal of Women Characters in Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag*

* Fayyaz Ahmed H.Ilkal

Rohinton Mistry is recognized as one of the acclaimed writers, with his award winning fiction. ***Tales From Firozsha Baag*** (1987), a collection of linked short stories, was short-listed for the Governor General's Award for fiction; ***Such* A *Long Journey*** (1991), his first novel, won both the Governor General's Award and the Commonwealth Writers Prize and in 1995, ***A Fine Balance****,* was the winner of the Giller Prize and the Commonwealth Writers Prize. ***A Fine Balance*** (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002) were both shortlisted for the Booker Prize. His works have been translated and published in over twenty-five languages.

Despite this widespread passion for Mistry's work, there is one area of his fiction that has received frequent criticism is his portrayal of women. Many critics find Mistry's female characters unidimensional and restricted. They are seen to be house bound; rarely leaving their apartment complexes while their husbands venture far and wide, not only in and around Bombay, but also to far off places. This article is however, largely disagrees with these claims of the critics. Although his female characters have their roles indomitable, to some extent, by community conventions, they often transcend their limiting circumstances and the gendered stereotypes that they may seem, on the surface, to exemplify. By attending to the social limitations of his female characters' lives from a feminist perspective. This paper examines the ways Mistry interprets the situations of women their experiences, histories and their responsibilities as wives, widows, mothers, and single women with the cultural fabric of Parsi India. An exploration of the situations of women in India is also essential. Indu Prakash Singh suggests:

"*Any study of women's subordinate position in a society, and its concomitant oppression must deal with both sexual/social/cultural and material/ economic conditions if we are to understand the nature of oppression which women encounter*" (22)

In addition to recognizing these factors, Manisha Roy points out the importance of understanding the cultural definition of femininity in India. She explains that for women in India "*What is stressed are indicators/signs both physical and mental which indicate that she will successfully play out her fu-*

ture female roles. What makes a woman feminine and attractive depends on what point she is in her life cycle and how well she is playing her roles" (138). In each of Mistry's books, the ways in which women perceive themselves and each other, as well as the variety of ways they are recognized by men, is largely determined by their roles and what is expected of them as wives, widows, mothers, and single women, they are alternatively oppressed and liberated within the traditions of modern India Parsis, as previously noted, are the most westernized religious group in India, and Parsi women have not been as widely subjected to the particular oppressive traditions and perceptions that Hindu and Muslim women have. Parsis, for instance, encourage women to pursue higher education and independence and often go abroad to pursue their interests (Trembour 115). Mistry explores the issues of education, independence, and ambition, while also addressing the continuing difficulties that even a relatively independent woman faces in a patriarchal society.

Mistry creates women who are, in once sense or another, defined by their relationships to men. This observation, however, by no means suggests that Mistry's female characters are limited by their associations with husbands, sons, or brothers. The argument focuses on how these women negotiate themselves within their relationships, many of them developing their own identities while fulfilling their obligations as Parsi wives, mothers, and sisters. The following examples from his short story collection ***Tales From Firozsha Baag*** are ones that illustrate the basic situations of Mistry's women -the ways they either transcend or merely deal with their circumstances are explored.

Amin Malak observes that Mistry "*opens exciting new vistas that expand the Canadian imagination beyond familiar Anglo-European motifs towards Oriental and Third World dimensions"* (103). As Mistry has expanded the Canadian imagination, it expands the feminine imagination by uncovering new ways of examining the diverse Parsi women in Mistry's ***Tales From Firozsha Baag*****.**

Baag is a Gujarati word meaning "garden," but it is frequently used to refer to the complex of buildings which house Parsis and which are also known as "*colonies*" (Lurham 250). Amin Malak states that in ***Tales from Firozsha Baag***, Mistry has created a "*vibrant image of a community caught in a cycle of restrictive traditions, economic needs, racial and religious tensions as well as inner psychological conflicts"(190)*. And because it is a collection of short stories, it includes a wide variety of women in different situations and stages of life.

In the first story, "Auspicious Occasion", Mehroo is a young Parsi woman married to Rustomji at the age of sixteen. Whereas, Rustomji is a man twice her age. He is a successful lawyer in Bombay and was considered as *"a fine catch" (3).* But Mehroo, now a woman in the prime of her life, must greet a toothless husband each day. Despite Mehroo's arguments in favour of fixing the leaks and peeling paint of their apartment, Rustomji controls the money

and decisions regarding the physical state of their apartment, earning him the name "*Rustomji-the-curmudgeon" (6)*.

This story, perhaps more than any other in the collection, illustrates the chores of a Parsi wife, especially during a religious occasion like *Behram roje*. Although Rustomji reflects that "*celebrating in this manner was Mehroo's own choice" (7)*, we are still struck with her long list of strenuous responsibilities and the fact that she must constantly mollify her grumbling, constipated husband. For example: "Her morning had started early: she had gotten the children ready for school and packed their lunch; cooked *dhandar-paatyo* and *sali-boti* for dinner; starched and ironed his white shirt, trousers, and *dugli,* ail washed the night before, and her white blouse, petticoat and sari ….If Gajra, their *gunga ,* did not arrive soon, Mehroo would also have to sweep and mop before she could decorate the entrance with colored chalk designs. (7)

In addition to these tasks, Mehroo is forever running around fetching tea for Rustomji, who silently blames her for sending the luscious Gajra away before he has his daily ogling session. Even when Mehroo returns from the fire-temple, distressed and sorrowful after the recent murder of her favorite Parsi priest *Dustoor* Dhunjisha, she still wonders how she will remove a stain from Rustomji's *dugli*.

Despite her endless list of chores, Mehroo's circumstances seem unusual, if not intriguing. For one, despite Parsi enthusiasm for female education, her orthodox family married her off before she completed high school. As well, Mehroo's unfailing commitment to religion not only allows her a degree of independence and an opportunity to journey from the Firozsha Baag complex, but also gives her something that she can claim as her own: "*It was her own private key to the universe" (13)*. And despite his constant perverse remarks about *Dustoor* Dhunjisha, Rustomji is willing to honour and participate in the orthodox ceremonies that Mehroo brought into her marriage from her parents' home, even secretly enjoying most of the *"age old traditions" (4).* But as far as he is concerned, a custom such as the traditional "unclean room" where menstruating Parsi women must stay for the duration of their period, is one that is "*dead and meaningless*"(7-8). Luhrmann explains that Parsi *"constraints on menstruating women are elaborate and among the most severe in India" (102).* He continues to illustrate the practices surrounding this tradition: Widely followed in the previous generation but less so today, the purity rules required households to have a small room, with iron furniture, in which the woman would live for the duration of her menstrual period. There she was allowed to touch nothing from her non menstruating life. Hindu women are usually considered unclean for the first three days of her period, while the traditional Zoroastrian restrictions applied to the entire length of the bleeding home. (268)

~~Rustomji's refusal to allow the "*unclean room*" is an admirable decision~~

on his part in spite of his other curmudgeonly idiosyncrasies. Mehroo, who was brought up in an obviously strict orthodox environment, likely wouldn't be immediately conscious of the far-reaching oppressive implications of such a practice. Rustomji, on the other hand, from a position that is somewhat more objective, can recognize that the cycle of this gross misconception of women's bodies must be broken.

In addition to allowing us a thorough exploration of one day in the life of Mehroo, her spirituality and responsibilities, Mistry gives us the private, fulfilled wife at the end of the story: She went back to him, asked him if he was ready for lunch and, receiving the anticipated refusal, smiled to herself with a tender satisfaction-how well she knew her Rustomji. She felt very close to him at this moment. (20-21)

In India marriage is considered an institution that develops identity and sense of fulfillment for women (Ghadially 21). And whether or not one sees this as a negative observation, the fact remains that Mehroo does experience a sense of comfort and serenity in her marriage. Despite Rustomji's Occasional unfavorable idiosyncrasies, Mehroo has carved out a place for herself-in her religious practices and in her strength and confidence as a wife. Anita Desai offers some insight into why many modern women are satisfied with traditional roles like the ones Mistry gives Mehroo. She explains: "By the sixties and seventies, independence came to be taken for granted. Women appeared to turn inwards and feel the need to explore their own identities as women. Strangely, they seemed to find the orthodox traditional society more congenial, more protective to their feminine identities than the modern one." (27)

Though Mehroo is occasionally limited and restricted by the cultural boundaries that dictate expectations of both her and Rustomji, in many ways, "Auspicious Occasion" is Mistry's most expansive story. He not only describes the traditions of the Parsi religion, he also displays his abilities to reconstruct a female perspective by creating a woman with a keen sense of individuality and identity.

In "Condolence Visit," Mistry gives us Daulat, a woman who describes the misery and anguish of watching her husband, Minocher, suffer through a lengthy and ultimately fatal illness. Although this story focuses mainly on the rituals and traditions expected of newly widowed Parsi women, Daulat offers details of her relationship with Minocher.

She reflects: "*Minocher ….reliable and always there; how lucky I was to have such a Husband. No bad habits, did not drink, did not go to the racecourse, did not give me any trouble" (64)*. It is of interest here to point out Mistry's social construction of men: Daulat feels fortunate her husband did not take on the stereotypical habits that men are often associated with-drinking, gambling, and "trouble" that could mean any number of things, from domestic

violence to infidelity. With this construction, Mistry inspires us to consider how men and women are both defined by the limited notions of what husbands and wives are allowed to become; if they transcend, they *seem* exceptional. It is important to mention that Daulat, like Minocher, transcends the expected spousal role: while remaining Minocher's primary care giver throughout his illness, Mistry portrays Daulat as a woman who tailors Parsi tradition to meet her needs when she is faced with the loss of her husband.

Like Mehroo, Daulat has a long list of daily tasks. But her duty is to keep her husband comfortable during his illness, and to keep him out of the impersonal hospital. She describes her *"months of endless pain, nights spent sleeplessly, while she listened for his breath" (60)* changing the dressings of his bedsores, and preparing food that he secretly deposits in a tin under his bed. Her entire life is consumed by Minocher's illness. For instance, while remembering her childhood and the three- month proscription against music when her grandmother dies, she abandons her radio out of guilt when Minocher first falls ill. She even lets go of her thoughts of "*evil and misfortune associated with all things serpentine*" (66) and makes oxtail soup: "*that day, they dined on what had made her cringe for years, the first hearty meal for both since the illness had commandeered the course of their lives" (66).* Daulat clearly shows a great deal of strength in the face of her husband's suffering; she is a woman whose identity is wrapped up in a private world of memories and sorrow.

"The Collectors" is a somewhat unusual story in *Tales From Firozsha Baag* because Mistry offers several angles with which to analyze Mrs. Mody, wife of the Dr. Bujor Mody. For one, unlike her husband, she is never named, remaining only "*Mrs. Mody*" throughout the story. When Jehangir Bulsara is invited by Dr. Mody to share his love of stamp collection each Sunday, Mrs. Mody is angered and her shrill arguments become known throughout the compound. She is often heard criticizing her husband for having time for "*strangers' children but not for his own" (86)* and complains about king *"bothered by inconsiderate people [Jehangir] on the one day that the family could be together" (92).* Still, the Sunday stamp collecting continues, and with each visit things get worse between the Modys.

It is difficult at first to define the exact source of Mrs. Mody's hostility. Certainly she is as frustrated as her husband with their delinquent son Persi, but there seems to be more to this equation than the possibility of Dr. Mody's internal neglect. For example, he says, *"When I retire I can spend more time with the Spanish dancing lady. And all my other stamps" (93)*. Her increasing animosity and *"domestic sorrows and disappointments" (96)* reflect the neglect she feels as Dr. Mody's wife: all the vehemence of Mrs. Mody's black rage of that morning poured out upon Dr. Mody: *"It has reached the limit now! No time for your own son and Sunday after Sunday sitting with some stranger! What*

does he have that your own son does not? Are you a baap or what? No wonder Persi has become this way! How can I blame the boy when his own baap takes no interest," (95)

The mild Dr. Mody, however, is difficult to blame because it is always her shrill voice that is heard. When the valued Spanish dancing lady stamp goes missing, it is clear that Mrs. Mody is irresponsible. Even when Dr. Mody is no longer the *"jovial figure"(98)* in the compound, it is easy to blame this change on his angry wife. If marriage is meant to develop identity, giving women a sense of fulfillment, then Mrs. Mody's frustration is more easily defined, especially when interpreted with a sympathetic eye. Her husband, a veterinarian, is not limited to the confines of the apartment complex. Even when he is at home, he has a hobby, an activity that she, incidentally, is not interested in. Therefore, in Mrs. Mody, Mistry has constructed a woman who is cut off from life; she is never described as doing anything but arguing with her husband. By keeping her domestic problems to herself, she does not develop meaningful friendships with her neighbors, keeping relations purely civil. When Mrs. Mody becomes a widow, Mistry gives us a woman even more alone as she copes with the loss of her husband, a man who, though fondly remembered by his acquaintances in Firozsha Baag, is recognized as one who neglected his son and who was unable to find happiness with his wife. It is only after Dr. Mody's death that Mrs. Mody is absolved of her behavior and apologizes to Jehangir for destroying the Spanish dancing-lady stamp: *"He did not lose it. I destroyed it.' She wanted to say more, but could not, and clung to his arm Finally ... she managed to say, 'Forgive an old lady" (102).* Her grief is palpable as we realize that, feeling powerless, she takes the one thing her husband truly cherishes.

"The Paying Guests," Mistry's mort disturbing story in the collection, illustrates the vicious conflict between a seemingly modern couple and their paying guests, leaving the women in the center of an ugly intra-gender conflict Out of financial necessity, Kashmira and her husband Boman rent half of their flat to an old couple, Khorshedbai and Ardesar, because Boman refuses to let Kashmira work: *"no wife of his would go out to work while there was breath in his lungs" (127)*. After two years, when they become more financially stable, Kashmira and Boman politely ask their paying guests to leave, which begins a long nasty battle. The battle never would have happened if, as Kashmira suggests, Boman had allowed her to get a job. With these conflicts, Mistry presents two women in opposing circumstances: Kashmira, a young wife cloistered within her portion of the flat, and Khorshedbai, an old woman who even further imprisons Kashmira. The relationship between the wives, and how Khorshedbai affects Kashmira's life, is perhaps one of the most intricate and significant aspects of the story.

Kashmira's initial confinement stems from Boman's refusal to permit her to work, placing her within a situation similar to Mrs. Mody's -a woman who does not venture from Firozsha Baag. Worse yet, however, Kashmira cannot even venture from the one room in her flat. Each morning, with equal parts anger and dementia, Khorshedbai scatters smelly things around the veranda like "*onion skin., coconut husk, egg shells trailing gluey white, potato peelings, one strip of banana skin, cauliflower leaves and orange rind" (123)* , and to top things off, dog faces which *"spattered..with a smack" (124).* This all occurs because of the eviction notice, while Kashmira stays in her room, *"behind the safety of the locked door" (124)*: *"Four weeks of calm and restrained littering had still not alleviated her fear that Khorshedbai would one day explode into an uncontrollable, shrieking madwoman" (124)*.

The most ludicrous and distressing aspect of Khorshedbai's daily defacement of the veranda is her incarceration of Kashmira, resulting in a woman against woman scenario. For one, aside from the eviction notice issue, Khorshedbai asks that Kashmira not *"emerge during her monthly" (129)*, a seemingly old-fashioned request that both Kashmira and Boman agree to, albeit with a degree of amusement. But when the old couple receives notice that they must vacate the flat, Khorshedbai's extreme reaction is based on an assumption that she and her husband have rights in this situation-which they do, but they do not include the right to scatter garbage around the veranda. For a woman so aware of her own rights, however, she completely discounts Kashmira's basic right to freedom-giving her notions a selfish, almost perverse quality. And while it is clear that the old woman is quickly approaching full-blown insanity, at the same tune we are struck
with Kashmira's unbearable living conditions: *"Kashmira needed at least one hour every evening on the veranda before going to bed She said it felt like someone was choking her, after being cooped all day inside the one room where they had to cook and eat and sleep" (127)*.

In addition to being cooped up while &man is at work, Kashmira is not onlyexhausted from her regular list of daily chores, she is also *"worn out with ... the extra sweeping every evening" (137)*. And while Khorshedbai is aware that Kashmira must clean up after her, Boman seems to be her intended target: *"Look at him standing chingo-mingo in his fancy dress, making his pregnant wife clean it" (136)*. Similarly, when the verdict comes to allow the paying guests to stay, Khorshedbai is emboldened when she sees Boman crushed and humbled by the outcome of the trial. She doesn't realize that the one most affected by her actions is Kashmira Mistry's portrayal of Ardesar and Boman is also worth noting. As husbands, both Ardesar and Boman are largely ineffectual characters, firmly on the periphery of the action. Ardesar, though exasperated with ~~his wife's conduct, is a kind, quiet man who makes excuses for Khorshedbai's~~

increasing madness, maintaining that *"The uncertainty of things was worrying her. That was all" (126).* Much like Dr. Mody, Ardesar is a man easily pitied; after forty years of marriage, even his gentle pleading cannot dissuade his wife from her vicious harassment When Khorshedbai stomps around the flat, cursing Kashmira and Boman, Ardesar stops listening, drifting off, imagining pleasant images like feeding the pigeons at Chaupatty beach.

Likewise, Boman is either at work or making unsuccessful plans and visiting with lawyers to force the paying guests to leave. Ironically, Firozsha Baag tenants like Najamai consider Boman *"a good husband" (140)* because he picks up groceries on his way home from work-a task that Kashmira is simply unable to do because she must stay in their room. Although he is racked with anxiety and sleeplessness, it is Kashmira who is left to deal with her day-to-day fear of Khorshedbai and the resulting locked-door policy. Like Mehroo and Daulat in Mistry's other stories, it is Kashmira's strength and perseverance that make her capable of withstanding her circumstances.

Khorshedbai, on the other hand, is a rather difficult character to analyze, especially in comparison to the other women characters Mistry has portrayed in the collection. Unlike the others, Khorshedbai's strength surfaces as an extreme fighting instinct which, in the end, gets the better of her. She is described as carrying an image in the back of her mind:

It was a flock of crows pecking and tearing to shreds some dead creature lying in the gutter. Whether she ever witnessed something of this sort or whether the image just grew out of various life experiences into a guiding metaphor, during times of adversity she would clench her teeth and repeat to herself that no one was going to peck her to pieces, she would fight back (128) .In addition to her life-long fear of powerlessness, it is conceivable that Khorshedbai's need, or desire, for a more forceful and significant social position than the role of housewife allows, has manifested itself in a fierce instinct for justice. As well, it is likely that having a somewhat complacent husband who has learned to tune her out has contributed to her feelings of frustration and her need to enter fighting, at al1 costs.

With the attention he gives the women's in *Tales From Firozsha Baag,* Mistry has established them as important characters both in the collection, and within their homes. Certainly, they are at times oppressed by their husbands, but it is the women, with the exception of Khorshedbai, who emerge as the admirable partners in marriage. They are the survivors-the ones who take charge and account for their mist Mrs. Mody, in *Tales From Firozsha Baag,* gains the recognition from her neighbors in the apartment compound as Dr. Mody's ill-tempered wife. After he dies, Mrs. Mody's life is spent coming to terms with the tempestuous and often spiteful relationship she had with him.

~~Other women, like Siloo Boyce and Mrs. Bulsara are only ever seen as~~

mothers. Mistry portrays their unfailing commitment to their sons, as well as the strong, and often culturally prescribed relationships they have with them.

Mistry offers Tehmina and Behroze, two women who are objectified for their appearance and behaviour but, by the end of the stories, are released from the dies into which they have been cast.

Rohinton Mistry very skillfully has portrayed his women characters in *Tales from Firozsha Baag* which holds mirror to their marginalized status and gender roles. His concern for women characters their performances in their family life and roles make them as memorable characters even after the book is laid down after reading. □

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Exploring Male-Female Relationship in The Plays of Mohan Rakesh

* Dr. Sri. Pa. Dhevarajan

Mohan Rakesh has been a prolific writer and his contribution to Indian Theatre is great. His full length plays - *One Day in Ashadha (1958), The Great Swans of the Waves (1962), Half Way House (1969)* and his short plays opened out new vistas for Hindi drama. While each of his plays has its own self-sufficient, particular theme wafting from the surface, there is, under the surface, one basic theme which binds all his plays-the theme of man-woman relationship, the lack of meaningful communication in human relations and the consequent tragedy which can be observed and experienced.

Rakesh's first play One Day in Ashadha, a historical play, based on the life of the renowned Sanskrit poet Kalidasa is about his first love, Mallika - a moving portrayal of the destiny of a simple rustic girl who loves the poet intensely and dreams of his greatness. Her dream is realized but she has to sacrifice all that is valuable in her life. For her Kalidasa is her total existence, but for Kalidasa she is only his inspiration. This juxtaposition between self love and total surrender of being in man-woman relationships is explored in the play. The play is also concerned with conflicts between art and love, creativity and environment, feeling and action, and artist and the state.

In Act I, Mallika, Kalidasa's beloved, enters the room, she is drenched in rain. She is happy and excited and has had a strange experience. She says, "Never before have I known such beauty, was intangible yet real. I could feel it, could see it, absorb it." Her mother Ambika is worried, not because she has got wet but because of her relationship with Kalidasa, the "sort of relationship' that people are not prepared to accept. She thinks that this relationship will ruin her life.

Some government officials have come from the capital to the village to honour Kalidasa. Everyone feels agitated at his refusal to go to Ujjain, the capital as he is not only /losing an opportunity of getting personal recognition but also of bringing honour to the family. Mallika persuades him to go there. Kalidasa's personality has two aspects - one as a poet and the other as a man who goes to Ujjain and is elevated to the status of governor of Kashmir, who comes back to his village and in spite of his knowledge of the fate of his

beloved, marries another girl, Priyangumanjari and leaves without meeting Mallika. Kalidasa's desertion of Mallika, his going to Ujjain and becoming part of the establishment has dried up his inspiration and creativity, this is in spite of the elaborate efforts of Priyangumanjari to reproduce for him the native environment in which he has grown up and created. However, she is no substitute for Mallika. Kalidasa has become a poetic soul in exile, one estranged from his natural self. Towards the end of the play Kalidasa confesses to having a feeling that he does not know himself, and, yet, he can tell Mallika that the man she had before her was not the Kalidasa she had known. Rakesh's next play The Great Swans of the Waves also based on the distant historical past explores the restlessness and predicament of modern man and yet another facet of man-woman relationship. In the play, worldly pleasures and spiritual solace are juxtaposed with the basic conflict of a man who is entrapped between the two and compelled to choose between them. Based on Ashvaghosha's Saundaranand, it portrays the internal conflict that goes on in the mind of Nand whose mind wavers like the great swans of the lake. He is unstable and irresolute and is obsessed with Sundari's beauty and by the end of the play, with his head shaved,he has a begging bowl in his hand. He can neither liberate himself from the trap of Sundari's beauty nor go to Buddha with an undefiled mind.

While preparations for the Love Feast are being done, Sundari tells Alka that Siddhartha left home secretly one night to become Buddha, not because the forest was more attractive to him than the home but because Yashodhara was unable to bind him with her charms. "The attraction of a woman makes a man masculine, while her repulsion makes him Gautam Buddha." Sundari is totally against the suppression of desires and concepts like salvation sound preposterous to her.

In Act II, when Nand is involved in Sundari's toilette, Alka tells him that Lord Buddha had come to their doorstep for alms and has now gone. Now, Nand is upset and anxious to go and begs forgiveness. As he holds a mirror in his hand for his wife, he hears a chant, "Buddham Sharanam Gachhami"; suddenly the mirror falls. His thoughts of going to Buddha to seek forgiveness, the breaking of the mirror and the flickering shadow in the lake symbolize his unstable mind.

Nand returns in Bhikshu's outfit with his head shaved and when he looks at his image in the broken mirror he wonders why he has got his hair cut and it does not mater at all because his heart has not changed. "My heart still possesses the same love for you and my eyes reflect the same image of your beauty". As Nand tries to complete the toilette of Sundari and as she sees his shaved head, she screams. In this situation Nand finds himself absolutely helpless and lonely. In this extreme mental agony he goes without meeting

Sundari in search of his lost hair. He wants to question Buddha, about what he has done to his hair. Sundari who had once said that the repulsion of a woman makes a man Gautam Buddha is greatly distressed to see Nand dressed up as a Bhikshu, overwhelmed by her defeat. The play portrays the image of fragmented characters struggling with their relationships and circumstances.

In Half-way House Rakesh confronts the contemporary reality directly without recourse to any historical background. He is still preoccupied with the man-woman relationship but here it is more pin pointed. The play presents the socio-economic predicaments of a middle class couple: the conflict between the working wife and her unsuccessful, unemployed husband and the clash of their egos. The husband, Mahendranath is an introvert and is overpowered by a sense of helplessness. He asks what status he occupies in the family and why he should endure everything silently. Entirely dependent upon his wife, he is like a "rubber stamp", devoid of self-identity. He undergoes a process of introspection and thinks that he himself is responsible for ruining his own life and of his family members and is "a worm who has eaten his house." His wife, Savitri also elevates his sense of futility. At a certain point in the play, she remarks, "your house, do you really, think it's your house."

Both the husband and wife are estranged from each other. Savitri feels that Mahendranath is not her kind of man. She asks, "why does man make a home? To fulfil a need.... to fill his inner incompleteness and to make himself complete." She desires to spend her life with a complete man. She encounters a number of men - lustful Jagmohan, leading a luxurious life, Singhania, who is selfish and Juneja, who maintains double standards - all of them are exactly similar, wearing different masks. Savitri's quest for completeness is not fulfilled like that of Padmini in Girish Karnad's Hayavadana.

Savitri and Mahendranath desire to escape from this hell but circumstances compel them to carry on their monotonous, unfulfilled lives together and hell stands eternal, inviolable reminding one of Jean Paul Sartre's No Exit, The name Savitri is significant. The Savitri of the tradition, had fought the lord of death to have the life of her husband restored. Rakesh's Savitri can desire nothing better than riddance from her husband. The Savitri of the past found her life meaningless 'without' her husband; this Savitri finds her life meaningless 'with' her husband.

As a result, the children develop a number of complexes, are frustrated and disappointed. All the members of the family do not understand the feelings, attitudes and needs of one another, it seems they form an entity called family but have not been able to develop as adjusted individuals. Such a unit does not offer its members, a 'home' a sanctuary to the soul, but a house divided.

Rakesh's short plays, *Perhaps* and *Hunh* on their own levels take up

the basic theme of Half-way House and weave them into an effective expression of a present-day predicament. In Perhaps, through the two nameless characters - man and wife, the playwright conveys the monotony, loneliness and emptiness in modern marital life and also the breakdown in communication. The characters seem to be talking to each other through different worlds. More often their dialogue is an articulation of their personal suffocation than a response to the other's communication. *Hunh* also with two characters-Mama and Papa takes up the themes of alienation and estrangement and conveys the absurdity of life. It also deals with breakdown of older relationships and humiliation felt by the parents when neglected by children.

Mohan Rakesh, by exploring man-woman relationship portrays life in its varied perspectives and helps one to understand the secret of life. His plays are not a mere cry of anguish or despair but a realistic portrayal of the contemporary man-in-the-street, his sufferings and ecstasies, his dreams and frustrations.

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Short-story

The Mango Orchard

* Dr.Vijay Prakash Singh

The mango orchard is at the centre of all my childhood memories of our village. It is close to the village and yet a good ten minutes of brisk walking. You can see it sitting from the verandah with its gnarled old trees planted by my great-grandfather, trees that still bore fruit at the time of my childhood. Just behind the orchard is the narrow guage railway track that does not take passengers to the big cities like Mumbai or Kolkata but to the neighbourhood towns on trains that chug away at a leisurely pace. The orchard is a cluster of very old trees-trees that grew and were nurtured by a long gone generation. It is easily approached through a raised track running through fields. Yet in the monsoons when the low-lying fields have submerged the track it becomes difficult to get through the short distance to the orchard.You can see the women with their sari's hitched up making their way way to a hidden place to relieve themselves of the call of nature in the still dusk of July just after a downpour with the toads crying hoarse with lust. There is a studied air of ritual in this quiet exclusively female way in which the women emerge under cover of dusk as if to fullfil a tryst.A few men can also be seen with more vigorous and bold strides. All these folks seek fields that are not inundated and a little remote from the village.

The mango trees are old as I said . Like mute sentinels they have stood through the generations bearing fruit year after year.The trees were withering, their trunks beset with red ants and cracking with fissures ,their roots home to termite nests.Yet despite this decadence there was a magic about the orchard , a quiet hushed aura that brings back the flavour of those childhood visits to the village.As you entered the orchard a thick layer of dry, brittle leaves crackled under your feet like shattering glass. The whistling of the insects seemed to intensify the silence as you made your way through crunching leaves, the fear of a snake slithering out from somewhere and wrapping itself around your feet or in an angry lash of disturbed privacy striking out at you, always lingered in your mind. The sun touched the outer part of the orchard but as you entered it a cool darkness seemed to envelop you like the green depths of a still river. All

around you stood the magnificent trees,so quiet and defaced with the ravages of time that they seemed to speak to you with a hushed despair, the termite nests rising beneath them like red icicles ,raw green fruit hanging tenaciously on to the tender boughs.You felt hypnotized by them in a strangely unaccountable way but as you made your way deeper into the orchard you stopped short of a gaping hole in the middle of the layer of dry crackling leaves. This was a well. There were stories of accidental falls in this well ;of mango thief falling in the dead of night, of a girl trying to escape the lustful pursuit of a hot-blooded *Zamindar*, falling in , of an adulterous woman pregnant before marriage willfully falling in.The thief and the pursued girl do not haunt the orchard but 'Bhootania' as the adulterous maiden is called makes her frenzied presence felt on full moon nights.It was a full moon night that she had jumped into the well. Sound branches begin to creak and whirlpools of dust dance like a dervish possessed even when no leaf stirs. Sometimes parrots begin to call out names in the dead of the night and at other times you can hear the muffled wails of a newly-born infant.

I would peer in with horror to see the brick lined well, peepul shoots sprouting from its crevices and nothing but murky black water that was like a layer of oil stagnating at the bottom. If the orchard is at the centre of my village memories,this gaping well in the heart of the orchard, has a horrible childhood association.

When the dust storms would come in the hot nights of summer the orchard became a source of another kind of excitement. While the storm would be raging we would scamper off with a torch-that would be hunted frantically in the house-to the orchard to pick out the raw green mangoes that lay scattered. We would fill our pockets and grab fistfuls, laughing and biting into the sour fruit we would feel the sharp tang in our mouths mingling with the dust. Flashing the huge torch this way and that for a prabable snake lurking among the dry leaves we flash the torch inside the slimy well which looked sinister in the dark.Then one of us would get the horrible idea of playacting 'Bhootania'the ghost woman.All the rest of us would get gooseflesh and we would run for our lives out of the orchard. The daredevil actor would hunch his back and flailing his arms jump and shriek and pursue us. On our return home a whole volley of questions would be fired at us,our ears would be pulled and our bottoms caned really hard.

Now after all these years with my hair graying and all these years of breathing city smog and battling with noise and shrinking space when I think of Kasimganj my village and its mango orchard I have felt like going back. I decide to go. I leave by a night train so as to reach Meerpur the railhead of my village early next morning. I can make out the proximity of the village from

an old landmark that seems to have changed beyond recognition; the primary school with its ochre paint peeling off to reveal broken plaster and bare backed children defecating under cover of its back wall. As the bus moves on I see that most of the open space that had been fields is now cluttered with ugly ochre painted box-like structures with hideous blue doors not unlike the lower-income housing of larger towns.Then I came across the railway track, now the scene of a makeshift bazaar. I anticipate that the orchard must now be hopelessly derelict. The bus goes past some dry fields and enters a depot. I get down and see two rows of shops on either side of a road. The shops were of all kinds: *Saleem Watch Repairs, Pakeeza Sari falls, Shiv Bhandar Bartan Wale, Ali Miya Paan shop, Badrinath Vaishnav Hotel etc* . When had these shops sprung up? They were a whole new dimension to the small shacks selling tea,cigarettes,paan, biscuits that were still there. At the end of the road I could see the familiar railway track. I go ahead and make enquiries. A young man in a jazzy terelyne shirt with a skullcap sits in *Saleem Watch* and looks up enquiringly at me. He holds a watch in his hand. I ask him when this marketplace has come up.

—Its been years Huzoor. I was a child maybe. I don't clearly remember.

—There used to be *bageecha* nearby. Where is it? I ask—A very old *bageecha*.

The young man rubs his stubbly chin and smiles, Huzoor you are standing at the very place where the bageecha was ! I want to tell him he is mistaken.Then I see the train track at the end of the road and I realize that the bazaar has been established exactly where the orchard was.I look about me in a daze as if expecting those old trees to spring up before me like Aladdin's genii but there are only shops here on either side of a road. The young man sizes up my lost expression and asks me if I belong to the village. I introduce myself at which he invites me to sit in his shop and despite my protests orders "especial chai". He proceeds to give me the history of the bazaar. " When your father refused to take charge of your grandfather's land as the elder son all the land passed on to your uncle after your grandfather's death. But your uncle lost little time in selling off the land and the orchard to a building contractor called Maqbool Miyan who promptly got all the trees chopped off to level the ground for a more profitable business. He built all these shops and we pay him rent."

In a flash I recalled that my young uncle was an alcoholic as well as a gambler. He also had two wives who kept quarrelling with each other. He would return home late at night lisping and lurching and there would be scenes between him and my grandfather. So he was the prodigal who had in one compulsive act caused my childhood memories to remain memories since the site of those memories had vanished. I look at the dozens of cubicles that Maqbool Hassan

has got made in the name of shops and realize that I have come too late. The Qasimganj traffic of motor cycles driven by hotbloods revving up their engines in an euphoria of speed and gaudy rikshawala's tinkling their way through the village crowds of men and women fills me with a strange sense of emptiness and I want to immediately catch the next bus back to the railway station. □

The True Man

* Amrita Pritam

It is all about Malik from Saiwal, the only son to a well-to-do family. He was handsome, cheerful and good natured. However, the thoughts of getting married never came to his heart…

His mother lived on the farm in the village and Malik was so obedient that he never objected what his mother said. Whenever, on being asked by his mother to get married he would think over it but that too for a short period.

Malik was about thirty-six, he was to reach fourty in four years, and for this, his friends would often say to him –

"Dear friend, so many beautiful, well-educated girls are there in your college and also well-emp-loyed like you, why don't you select one of them?"
Malik would simply laugh and say –

"I have seen many but they all seem rather odd to me. They are not my type."

Malik had built a small house in the town, having a small and beautiful garden. Covered with dense, green creepers, the walls were hidden from view, as was his heart, into which none could peek. The dancing flowers and the swaying creepers were the only disturbing elements to his still home but no one ever succeeded in interrupting the silence of his heart. Sometimes, while talking with his friends he would say –

"If someone comes into my life then who will make her silent? I love my home too much and if somebody comes then it will no longer be mine".

One day, he was standing inside a big bookshop engrossed in some books when suddenly his eyes caught a girl standing a little far away from him

wearing a black gown with a white *dupatta* on her shoulders. She equally, was involved in turning over the pages of a particular book. Then perhaps she moved for another when Malik could see that she was wearing two small beautiful earrings that were dangling gently but his attention was constant.

Malik kept on watching that plainly dressed girl. His gazing eyes stirred the girl and with a slight look at him, she quickly retreated towards the second stack of books…

Malik felt that girl to be a doe who got frightened looking him ….

And he couldn't know when the girl left him and that place ….

Malik went to the shopkeeper who was quite familiar to him and asked about who that girl was.

The shopkeeper replied - -

"I wouldn't know her name but she comes here once in a while and even buys many books…"

Then something struck him and he told - -

"Wait a minute! I think we have her name and address written somewhere. Many a time she orders the books over phone requesting them to deliver personally or by post…"

After checking his register he again told - -

"I got her address, the phone number too. Her name is Shamli …"

And with some unknown reasons Malik noted her name and address in a paper and kept it in his pocket…

He verified the address and found that she is unmarried….

Now Malik's heart was beyond his control. He did not try to meet shamli again rather directly met her parents and gave a marriage proposal …

Shamli's parents treated Malik as someone sent by God. Malik wanted that they should ask their daughter about the proposal. He will not go against her will …

But hardly three days had passed, Shamli's parents came to his home with the sweets as *Shagun*…

Malik only told that he didn't like the showy and pompous kind of marriage. What mattered for him was the presence and blessings of the parents …

Shamli's parents too gave their concern to it…..

Only a little formality and everything else was finished. Shamli doubled the beauty and charm of Malik's home, just like a moon among the stars.

Malik was surprised that how the dream-like thing had come true.

The peon of his college used to come to his home twice a day to cook. And now when Shamli would serve the *rotis* to him, he often felt that he is tasting *roti* for the first time in his life …

One day Malik said –

"You seem to be tired doing these tedious domestic chores. Better we should call that peon again to prepare the food", but Shamli would say –

"No, the food prepared by him is tasteless."

The silence was not at all interrupted after Shamli's coming to his home. One day embracing her Malik said –

"Where were you so long?"

"If I'll ask the same to you?" Saying this Shamli drooped her head down.

Malik was in a romantic mood. He again said –

"Why didn't you come to my life earlier? Now what shall I do about my lost years?"

Nobody knows why tears came into Shamli's eyes; she said –

"This is what I often ask God that what shall I do about my past years?"

And one day Shamli, after gazing at Malik's face for a long time, said –

"I don't know why sometimes I feel I have seen you somewhere…. I don't know where and when?"

That day Malik laughed and answered –

"Perhaps in some other birth…"

And Shamli's face turned red in coyness…

Days went by. One day shamli was in a doleful mood. She asked –

"Shall I go to my aunt's for two days?"

Malik thought that Shamli never asked to visit her parents for once even, then how come she is interested to visit her aunt all of a sudden. He asked –

"Does she live nearby in this town?"

Shamli replied –

"No! It takes one night to reach her village. She lives there all alone, in a decaying mansion of her time. Her husband is no more now and her sons too have travelled abroad…"

Malik smiled –

"If you wish to, then go. Why to ask for it?"

Shamli left for her aunt's for two days. When she returned, Malik could see that shamli looked very weak and pale in just two days….

For Shamli, Malik was more than a man; he was almost like a God. And one day Shamli felt that she could bear no more. She will have to talk to him that night whatever may be the consequence… She would confess everything to him…

And that night when she was in Malik's arms, she burst out with tears. She said –

"Mother had told me to keep silent, but now it seems like a crime being silent before you…"

Kissing her on her lips Malik said –

"Whatever you'll say, I would gladly accept it…"

Shamli asked –

"Even my faults?"

With a heart full of love, Malik replied –

"Yes, your faults too…"

After being silent for a moment Shamli said –

"It was not deliberate from my side, but as a sort of an accident I committed it…"

And sinking in sobs she said-

"It was about three years ago… I met a person in one of my friend's house, and he used to visit me in that particular bookshop…. After few days he told that he wanted to marry me …. There was no point to reject at all, he was good looking, I gave my concern… And also started going to his rented room. He would often say that his job is now temporary and he is waiting for it to be permanent… And after knowing that I am pregnant he left the town overnight along with his room and job…"

Malik's hands on Shamli's back turned cold, still he asked –

"Why didn't you look for him? It could have been easier for you to get his address from the place where he was working …."

Shamli became almost furious and said –

"Was he a man at all, so that I would have searched for him?"

Malik loved Shamli's view point. Embracing her he told –

"What about the child then?"

Shamli wept to her heart's content and then said –

"It was almost time. After getting to know all about this mother became terribly irritated and sent me to aunt's, where she stayed alone."

And keeping her head on her hands she said –

"Mother had strictly directed aunt to put the child secretly in some hospital. But I wept hugging her tightly and said - mother is not being kind to me, at least you be. In the name of God at least, you keep the child with you".

There was no sign of anger or complain in Malik's voice, he asked –

"How old is that child now?"

Shamli replied –

"About two years. That's why I went to aunt's to see the child…"

To stop Shamli from weeping Malik again asked –

"What's his name?"

Shamli replied –

"What name? What would have I kept and upon whose name? So I call him *Anam*…"

The darkness of that particular night kept on watching at Malik's face when he said –

"Let's go tomorrow then, and bring our child home…"

Shamli couldn't speak any more….

Malik said –

"Shamli, I am a true man, who has loved you truly. As you are mine, so the child is…." □

BUSINESS

* Rajendra Kumar Roul

Killing two birds with one stone!

An old adage I had read in my remote past of childhood days where the teacher simplified the meaning of the same as harvesting two benefits undertaking one venture or more frankly, to solve many problems with a single action.

Now, I think what a powerful line was that? Whoever told this – whoever - must be a very wise and cunning person; I can assure, else it would not be possible on part of an ordinary people like me or you to tell such a tactful line, easily. We'll have to make a clean breast of him that he must be a ton times capable person, altogether as compared to us.

Then how will it be possible?

After all, it is not an easy task ever to hit two flies with one slap in a real world, I thought. Life is a real game, not a miraculous sequence of a cartoon film. It is not like the epic serials displayed in the televisions where a magic arrow can slaughter successively tens of hundreds of enemies at a single stroke.

It is mid night and I am writing the story. The wall clock in another room in which my lovely child Pipi was in deep sleep with her mother signaled it was 2 A.M. But I can't sleep even though I am trying hard. Sitting before the computer, Iam rather thinking that how one can slaughter two preys with one bullet? How one can get two or more benefits undertaking one venture? A dirge fighting is running between my sleepless-eyes and me. The essence of the

adage is hunting me. I ponder over how to implement it in reality.

"Is there any way out? If yes, then how?"

"Yeh! There is a way out!!"

Uma had told me, once. We had already completed two bottles of whisky and devoured a few plates of chicken masala by then. He belched and advised while crunching a bone piece -

"Yeh! There is a way out!! I can assure of it."

"But how?" I frowned.

"Stratagem — trickery! He whispered intoxicated. "Yaar, lets entrap a well off person having interest in music and coax him gradually to make a music album. If fortunately he agrees than make sure that our problem is solved. There will be hardly any difficulty in harvesting two targets simultaneously in one bullet. Rather, that will result in two benefits for us. Benefit one- we will make some money out of it and Benefit number two- we will earn some name and fame in the market too.

"But is it as easy as you think"? I questioned. Some strenuous problems also are there. The person who will invest his hard-earned money to make an album with our songs must not be a fool or stupid fellow bearing the intention of consign his to water. He must have some aspiration of weaving certain returns from it. But who will be the guarantor for this? Me? No, not at all. This is not less dangerous than committing a serious mistake for me? Besides, it is definitely a sinister plan.

How will we ensure that our songs will click in the market and harvest dividends what we are expecting for? The market situation is deteriorating as piracy plays here a vital role; what you know better than me? Even after our album breaks into the market evading vigilance of the pirates, it is ok or otherwise the principal will be gone.

I don't have less experiences of that kind. Some years back, we four friends started a literature magazine. We had the expectation of making huge profit out of it. I personally assured them that the venture will yield huge dividends. But alas! That did not work as I thought. On top of all this, many people promised to arrange some advertisements to be published in the magazine which would have earned us some money. But, when the moment of truth came, nobody was there to our rescue. Everyone proved them as a serpent under the flower. Finally our entire investment was thrown into water. I still don't muster the courage to face those friends who have lost their hard-earned money following my commitment. After gaining such a bitter experience, in fact, I have no courage to instigate somebody else assuring him of sure return?

Then, how is it possible to shoot two rabbits with one shot?

"Strategy management!"

Someone most successful in biz world once remarked, I recalled. First,

strategize your plans and with clear strategies step into the market. Try hard as per plans and success will be rolling on the ground beneath your feet. Of course, you can't assure that there will not be any loss. Business tycoons like Lehmann Brothers in America can turn bankrupt and fall. There is no count of business suffering losses and perishing in the current day's market. Even after knowing the cruel reality, people do business. Many a marriages becomes unsuccessful, relations fall apart in love marriages too, that does not imply that people don't get married or people don't fall in love. Life has got to go anyhow.
Strategy! Strategy management is the key to every success.

Still I can't convince myself. Everybody cannot be successful in business. You need to have special qualities for that. My father is a great example of that.

He undertook a number of steps, many adventurous steps in his life. But what he got is nothingness and nothingness. First started a paddy crushing machine - failed, a ration shop - failed, then he started a poultry firm and that also ended in vain. He has a long list of futile business to his dubious credit. Hence, he has cautioned me from the beginning-

"Dear son! Never think of doing a business in life. I admit there is heavy money hidden in it, but not for all. One has to forget oneself for that. I don't think that you are capable for that; in fact neither was I nor my father, I mean your grand pa! So it will be prudent my son, anyhow search a job and survive and let your family manage with that."

I have done exactly that. Like an obedient son, I have taken up a job in a press. I am working there as a proof reader. That is not sufficient for sustenance. So, in addition to this I am undertaking a part time job of teaching music in a nursery school. This job is on contractual basis. If there are classes, there is payment, unless nothing.

All of a sudden my thought got derailed. My wife woke up and punched a little on my shoulder. Perhaps the disgusting sound of the key board might get her sleep disturbed.

"Hello, what are you doing, man?" She murmured disgustingly. "It is already mid night! Are you suffering from insomnia? What are you doing here, exactly may I know?" She asked and yawned.

"I'm drafting a story!" I mumbled.

" What..! Story….!" She gazed astonished and wrinkled her nose. "What will you do with that?"

"I'll hang it around my neck and dance hopingly." I replied sarcastically.

"Hish….! If you don't want to tell, it's ok. Why are you getting angry?"

"Angry! Else what should I do, then?"

Ok. Ok... Leave it. She again told, while rubbing her hair with eyes closed. What I wanted to tell is tomorrow there is going to be solar eclipse. There will be no cooking, so no food. My brother warned me yesterday; the eclipse starts at around *7 am*. So don't ask me for food.

"No cooking! …No food!"

I got shocked. How can I manage to go to the school tomorrow and sing for around three hours with the children? Will my empty belly permit me to do so? Can I really manage to work in office after the school when the empty belly will be started playing guitar using my entrails as its strings?

Instantly, I feel someone emerged within me and slapped and asked- whether your school is going to be closed tomorrow?

"No!" I replied

"Whether the press is closed tomorrow?"

"No!" I said.

"Then is the general life going to be paralyzed tomorrow?"

I too replied- No… no… no… absolutely not!

"Then, why there will be no cooking? Who the hell is that lady to proclaim article 144 (prohibition) on your food. Since her brother prohibited her, she may not take food but what right does she have to prevent you from taking food. If you don't take food, then how will your fingers dance on harmonium rid?" He snorted in disgust.

I grimaced. You are right brother — hundred percent right. I should take food and I will. Why would she prevent me from enjoying my right?

I thought to say upfront that I will take food tomorrow. Let me see who stops me? The man inside provoked me to go and tell her that at any cost you need food tomorrow. I turned to her, too. However, found her in deep sleep again.

Once again the man inside me instigated me to wake her up from sleep and teach her lesson that you, not she, is your boss.

I rubbed my head reluctantly and told modestly to him- look man! She is already asleep. It is not justified to awake her now. Then, once I open my mouth, it'll create a chaos so that neighbor will awake. There will be a lot of fuss about us in the colony. Let the matter be buried here. After all I am not quarrelsome, per se.

Perhaps he did not get satisfied by me. So furiously drew my hair from all sides of my head and yawned himself. I shut the computer down and went to bed. Actually, the night did not pass on smoothly. I can hardly sleep.

kring…kring..kring…

The mobile screamed. I took up it irritatingly though there is not a bit interest within me as I was dozing off.

It is Uma! I surprised.

"Hi! You are still in bed!" He astonished. "Did not you remember that

we'll have to go to a music sitting? They will be waiting for us. We will have to let them listen our tunes. It is already *8AM*. Get up man, hurry up!"

"My goodness! It is *8AM*? Is it really morning!" I exclaimed

"Who the hell told you it is morning?"

My wife teased me while combing her hair in front of the mirror. By nature she was like that. So I did not pay a bit attention to her. Actually, I had no intention to off my mood in this early morning as I was preparing myself to go for a musical performance. Ultimately I scared that quarreling with her might affect my vocal cord and my sense of singing as well.

I turned my gaze to the window and replied to Uma, "get ready; I am meeting you within half an hour with my harmonium, bye!"

"By the way, where are you readying for? School? But it's Sunday!" She pleaded like a prosecutor's cross-examination.

"My god! This lady is planning to kill my mood, today." I enraged impatiently, but said nothing. It is wise to keep self-control and move away from her by hook or crook.

So with the intention to get rid of her I started flattering her accumulating all the sweetness in my voice- Darling, actually some people has come with an idea of making a music company and I am going to meet and let them listen my tunes. That is what Uma reminded me of. I have to set out within half an hour. Sitting will be held at *Cuttack.* Ok.

"Whether they are paying for this?" –she quizzed clinically.

"Why not!" I replied un-interestingly. "Moreover, if they like my tunes and finally agree for the album, then…"

My wife's face bloomed in delight. As if, the sun dazzled scratching the darkness of eclipse. I recalled what a friend told me once that only two things are barely required to please a woman: one is money and the other is love. But remember the later must be an anatomical fight. He whispered later.

I now realized what he told. See! How pleased my wife looks after listening about money.

I prepared hastily. Tied the harmonium in the bike and started off there where he will accompany me. My wife waved her hands. But I got a different meaning of the gesture. Perhaps she was telling me- come home with money, unless stay there.

By the time I reached Uma. He was already waiting for me by our destined avenue with his tabla (drum).

"Where is his bike?" I stared here and there.

Perhaps He guessed what my eyes were searching for. He grinned and told- I have not brought mine. Actually no fuel avails for that. After all why two bikes as we are for same destination? Moreover, if we go together, we can save both our time and expenditure, easily.

I stared at him helplessly. My eyes were drenched in loneliness as if

a great cyclone had destroyed my home – snatched my happiness away. No one is to lament for me. Everybody is prepared to plunder.

"Why can't I do what others do easily with me?" I told myself irritated. How can people become so protective like that of the turtle which get into the carapace as quickly as possible to hide him? How Uma could clarify his points for not bringing his bike. Why could not I tell him otherwise? He is newly married and does not have much responsibility as I do. I am a poor father of a two years girl child. I have fuelled my bike up with the money meant for buying my child's Horlicks. Why can't I persuade him to do so?

"No, I can't pretend myself as a tortoise. I can't cheat me, ever."

I got a push from behind, while I was absorbed in such useless thoughts. "Move a bit ahead" - told Uma and asked- Are you comfortable?

He was on the back seat, harmonium was in the middle and I was literally on the oil tank of the bike. If there will be a slight push from behind, I will find myself on the handle of the bike. "Yeh, absolutely." Still I replied. "Hold the harmonium carefully."

I geared the bike up.

On the way Uma asked- in which scale you are going to sing. I have had the G-sharp tabla.

Ok, it will do. Well, I continued. The people who have come to apprise us can only listen, don't have knowledge to judge. But keep in mind that don't speed the tempo of your rhythm so that songs will be detested. Be careful for that. Remember perfect rhythm leads a vital role to make a song melodious. Unless it might kill a singer on the spot.

He bobbed his head.

We reached finally at our pre-specified destination where they were waiting for us. Without consuming a second I prepared myself to perform. Uma with his tabla by my side.

"Should we start?"

Uma said while hitting his fingers on the round surface of the tabla, unmindfully.

" Yes, but songs should be attractive as well as trendy." Said the fat man, one of the hosts.

"Of course… of course! You the gentlemen, just listen!" Said Uma twinkling of his eyes. "We swear, our tunes will pierce into your liver."

Finally, I started

One –two –eight—and ten songs.

I continued to sing one after another and they went on nodding eyes closed. After a little while that fat man, one of the hosts stood up suddenly and then shouted- stop and stop! Fine tunes and attractive lyrics – wow - wow - ~~good - good – trendy, you the guys have made a very good job. But it is enough.~~

Now let's take lunch.

"Exactly I was thinking so." Said Uma – "My fingers are no longer prepared to support me. See how they have continuously played on tabla for last few hours."

I stared him disgusted. Cheat… wicked… evil! I told to me- have you co-operated me a single time making a perfect rhythm to make my tunes melodious? Let it, he will not change. I packed my harmonium.

The waiter served some delicious meals to all of us. Absolutely a royal menu. Immediately, one thought itched my mind. What would be my daughter doing now. Whether her mother would have fed her something or not for the sake of solar eclipse.

It is not easy being a father. Once my father told me that you can understand a father when you will be a father. I sigh.

We finished our lunch, and then sipped tea. I prayed God for their consent regarding making a music album. Eventually, that fat man, one of the hosts opened his mouth twiddling his moustache in a matured and choked voice- "Friends, your songs are soothing to listen and are of different pattern; hope, they will supersede the prevailing trend."

I lowered my head submissively and felt delighted as if the dreams were in front of me.

"But we can't take decision. He continued- that is all in our Big brother's mercy. Our duty is to bring liaison between you and him. He'll come on twenty-third of the month. Then deal will be finalized if he gets satisfied. But don't worry; we assure that the tunes made by you will definitely impress him. We will give our feedbacks in favor of you."

"Today is the 3rd of the month; I counted, twenty more days to go for twenty-three. If everything will be of him, then why you people did come today to make this farce?" I told myself silently and looked depressed at Uma. But He was no more there around.

Actually, I was thinking in a different perspective. I expected the deals will be approved. My debut album will see life. I will get some money, too. I will pay back the money I have taken for fuelling off my daughter's money. Some money I will hand over to my wife. But nothing happened like that.

I remembered- I negotiated with them that they have to pay *500 rupees* for playing rhythm so that that will make my tunes melodious. Well, let them pay that amount. I consoled myself. Let's wait till twenty third of the month.

"Ok, let's leave!" Said the fat man.

"But what about the payment regarding that of Rhythm what was a contact between us?"- I asked politely.

"Oh! Those five hundred rupees! I really forget." The fat man laughed aloud.

And he opened his purse, instantly. My eyes were getting brightened. At least something will be recovered. We'll distribute it mutually. I said to myself. But Uma – God knows where he was - reached instantly and snatched the notes away by a sudden pounce from of the person's hand before I poured a glanced on it. "Oh! It is not at all easy to play the tabla!" He muttered and kissed the notes exultantly. But I looked at him just dumbfounded.

While descending from the steps of the hotel, I asked- why did you take the entire five hundred rupees?

"What's wrong? You have dealt it. The payment you contact with them for rhythm what they paid. So I took. What's your problem yaar?" He replied adamantly.

"That's Ok, but let's divides and shares equally. I have also a part of this. You know I fuelled the bike spending my daughter's money." My voice echoed pathetically.

"I am undone! I can't help you." He pleaded. "You can't imagine how I am steering my family here. My brother has been hospitalized breaking his leg, yesterday. And so many problems I am facing day by day, what I could not describe before you. Then, you tell how it is possible of sharing this little amount of money? If it is possible be kind enough to lend me another one thousand rupees. I swear I will pay them off back to you with some extra interests just by a month.

I got astonished. What is hard to believe is the stiffness of his words he is using for me. He'll pay me back money with all the interests simultaneously just after a month! What a surprise? Over confidant; isn't he?

He was driving and I was on the sitting seat with my harmonium. He seemed courageous – hilarious. I smiled faintly with a silent sigh and remembered-

I have been familiar with this guy for past five years. He has got a very adept hand. He plays tabla so nice that a song becomes charming of its own way. From that day I used to take him with me to play tabla. He is very polite as well as hardworking. He is the only bread earner in his family and recently got married. It is only me who can better realize the guy than anybody else. But this was all vague. I no more knew him. It seems as if I meet him just now – a few seconds ago. How easily he could say me chivalrously that he will repay his all debts with interest!

"How is it possible?" I asked.

"You don't have believed; haven't you?"

"No—no, matter is nothing like that." I promptly replied. "But how?"

"Business!!" He smiled.

"Business? When did you start that?" I exclaimed.

~~Today itself, a person came across me outside the hotel. He is of *Bhubaneswar*.~~

I talked to him at length. Ok leave that. Will you please lend me four thousand rupees? He asked carelessly.

I threw a meek smile into the air and said-

"Me? Four thousand? Are you crazy?"

I really laughed open-hearted. But he became serious and told strongly- Are you joking at; aren't you? Ok, my time will come when I will be laughing and you go on looking at me.

"Don't take it otherwise. Why would I play joke at you? Rather I will pray God for your success."

He forcible braked the bike. I got a heavy jolt and leaned towards him. But, saved narrowly from falling down.

Looking at me grudgingly he told; don't utter that word 'God' before me again. There is nothing in that name. Only a pretention. People rely only on that false non-existent thing. I realize how you are struggling for survive, running here and there for filling this six inch belly? If I can, why can't he? You have spent your money meant for your daughter. You have taken so much of pain singing all through the day there in the hotel. What did you get in return? Did not he – your so called God - see anything?

He got off the bike. I kept on staring at him. What happened to him all of sudden? I thought.

He started- don't think me a cruel fellow as I plan to take these entire five hundred rupees away without giving a penny to you. Take three hundred and the rest two is mine.

His voice got shrilled. He continued. I know, I don't play the tabla spiritedly. Why'll I do? Who will give us a break? We don't have any god father here. You know, in particular, without god father no one can even stand in music industry. It is enough.

Sometimes tears pretend. I looked at him. My eyes were drenched. I didn't allow the tears to surface. My lips drank all of them. My heart got choked with his heartbreaking emotional frustrations.

I stretched my hands to console him. He stepped back some inch and said don't tell me 'keep patience'. I am fed up with these words. These words seem attractive on the lips of the great men. This does not have any relevance for common people like you and me.

I realized Uma has lost all his patience. I asked him to sit at back and I drove myself. Before kicking the bike I patted him and told-You want to do business; don't you? Ok, I will help at best.

"Is it?" His eyes glittered as if he has got the news of a new morning.

"Of course!"

By the evening I reached home. But I forgot to ask him when did he need the money? After all it was my accountability as his mentor to know what sort of business he wants to do. It is obvious that he is a sentimental guy. So

let him do everything on his own accord. What important is to help him.
This is how, a week was over. I suffered from severe fever. Neither could I attend the school nor the office. It was really a very frustrating week for me. I got irritated keeping me confined in a room. One day I thought it would be better if I could go to the temple nearby and sing some devotional songs before the deity. At least the heart will be relieved to some extent.

I told my wife about my idea. She also did her consent and advised to take Uma with me as I am not completely cured. Right, it is not a bad idea to take Uma with me. I also agreed with her. I dialed his mobile at once. That was off. I tried again and again, but the mobile replied the same. Then I dropped the idea of going alone to the temple. My health situation made me scared of. But somewhere I have to go. Ok, it will be better to go and have a stroll by the river bank.

I was refreshingly walking by the river bank. People were coming and going to and fro. Thought of Uma was striking my mind every time. His tearful eyes and emotional speeches were still alive and playing football within me. I promised to arrange some money for him. But I couldn't. Because I was laying down for last seven days and was fighting with my fitness. Who knows in which way he will take all these?

I wandered inattentively with these tearful thinking in my mind. Perhaps it had been elasticized a long distance if I would not get a jerk that Uma is coming towards me riding a cycle, hurriedly. Surprise, this is Uma! But why in cycle?

He alighted and stood the cycle on the middle of the road.

"Have you arranged the money for me?" He quizzed not allowing me asking any question about him. What I would have asked him, really? Perhaps about his whereabouts and wellbeing. But I could not muster courage to ask him; rather I felt guilty and told depressingly-

"I was suffering from fever and have not been out of home. Anyway, I will keep my promise intact."

His face paled at my negative reply. But I assured him- "don't feel dejected. Everything will be all right. By the way, where are you going now?" I asked. "I was thinking of going to a temple premises. Would you like to accompany me? I also called you for that. But your Cell was switched off. What happened?"

"Temple! Why?" He frowned.

"Just freshening mind and if possible we'll perform some devotional songs before God. At least mind will be relieved." I said.

He laughed aloud. No way! I am not a fool to waste time going there.

And paddled his bicycle and galloped. I laughed at his innocence.

In fact, I had a lot of things to tell him. But my words got stuck around

my lips. I kept on looking at him. What happened him, really? He seems to be a changed man altogether.

From the very next day I started searching for the people who can help me for the rupees that I have promised to Uma. In fact he was looking very frustrated. He must be badly in need of the money.

Some days passed in between. It was night of 22nd of the month. I was prepared to go to the bed. My mobile rang - cring… cring… cring…
I lifted the mobile.

It was their call whom I met at Cuttack and performed my songs before them. I got exalted seeing the call. Anyone of them perhaps that fat man told- they are now at Cuttack staying in the same venue. Their Big brother is anxious to listen my tunes once again. Than deal may be finalized. Can I come tomorrow?

"Sure! Why not?" I said. He disconnected the line. My joy knew no bounds. I punched in the air. I felt as if I was flying. I kissed my daughter, again and again. Perhaps my wave of joy overwhelmed my wife. She got frightened and could not ascertain that why I am behaving like a kid. "What happened?" She asked a few minutes later.

"The album people called me. They invited me tomorrow morning at 7 AM. Things will be finalized tomorrow. Then my debut album will hit into market. I owned lottery, ha – ha - ha!"

"Oh God, the man get mad!" She said as if I really got mad. "Don't be so hilarious baby – she continued- "reality is still away. It will be healthy for all of us that you sleep and let us sleep."

"Why will I sleep? Why? Could not you see that the call was on behalf of them? If they had not liked my tunes they would not have called me on their behalf. It suggests that time is in favor of me. Hey, you can't understand as it is beyond your imagination."

I dialed Uma. Oops! His mobile is off. Rascal! I became disgusted. Every time his cell is out of range. Where is he now, then? Is he really here or not? What would happen if I don't get Uma tomorrow? Without rhythm the music leads no meaning. I hardly have time to arrange for somebody else for the job. Even if I arrange somebody else, I will not be that comfortable with him as I am accustomed to Uma for past five years.

Reluctantly, I hauled myself up to the bed, but hardly could asleep. Rather I was murmuring the tunes of the songs I intend to play tomorrow. Meanwhile my eye lid kissed each other in my ignorance. At that moment, my wife swung me violently and told-

"Hello! Get up it is already *5.30 AM*. You have to reach Cuttack by *7 AM;* haven't you?

I jumped from bed. Got ready within fifteen minutes and started for

Uma. It was early dawn. Roads were not clearly visible in thick fog. I was roaming in the dream land. I was literarily found myself performing before that so called Big brother. He got satisfied. The bond papers were signed. And I got the advanced cheque also. My luck got unlocked.

By that time I had reached at Uma. His doors were half closed. I did not have the patience of knocking at the door. I sprang forward and entered into his room. I saw him sitting on the bed wrapping a blanket all over his body. I couldn't see his face clearly as he buried himself under the blanket. But he got startled to discover me in the wee hour of the morning and shouted unexpectedly as if he saw a ghost.

"You!"

"Idiot, why have you kept your mobile off? I want to give you a heavy slap. Rascal! – I burst my anger without any pause.

He looked dazed at me.

"Don't look me dumb. Hurry up; get ready. Things will be finalized today. Let me prepare your tabla. Where is it? I searched around.

All of a sudden, Uma busted into tears and said-

"Nothing is left to me, my dear! I have sold everything - mobile, watch, bike, tabla - to arrange money for business. But my partner has already been missing for past couple of days. There is no trace of him." □

Translated by Mr. Udaya Kumar Mohapatra, Economic Officer, Punjab National Bank, New Delhi

Two Poems by Dr. Nandini Sahu

(I)
The Cosmic Upsurge

I beseeched God to give me might and control.
But He chose to consign obstacles in my way
I assume, He did so to make me valiant
to be able to put up to them.
I begged of Him to give me
assets and opulence.
But He, in His acumen, conferred
Knowledge on me - to do my duty.
This was His way to plant it in my mind
that things that come in life unforced,
are futile.

Then I urged Him to shower the spell of rain
of His love on me.
But He shove me off to regions
Where live the unfortunate.
I silently learnt, the Supreme Being was whispering
onto me...
"You can assert my love and leniency
by embracing the distressed..."
And when I asked Him to give me nerves
to fortify myself,
I found myself hampered with tribulations.
I wondered if it was God's approach to make me
admit the challenge!

Lastly, I asked the Lord that if nothing else,
at least grant me a windfall.
While the boon did not approach
I found some prospects breach up.
I sensed God was impressing me

to confiscate them and
become laudable of His blessings,
worthy of his love.
Today
Looking in the rear view
I apprehend
I got all that in reality
I sought after
from life. □

(II)

Chasing the Mirage

If I stand, it would stand and jeer.
If I chase, it's not near.

It's the explicit, homogeneous, clear-sky
unrelated-to-anything, always-shifting,
nameless and ageless
sinking melancholy.
The mirage.
In life's own indigenous melancholy
I live in a city of slow-motion
survive like an art-film,
which, you may love, but
not like to live.
Melancholy leaks here, everywhere,
leaving a damp breath
amid a partitioned-companionship.
Here, each day is just
a replica of the previous day.
I try to translate the feeling,
the punch word is lost.

These days
plowing in the past or
poking at the future
never quiescent at present
I unpack happiness
as I would unpack my

mother's best silks, stored for years.
An autonomous woman that I am
sometimes
I am my own mother.
Again
I take a forward-backward spin
spiraling with the taste of mortality.
I realize the spiritual dictionary
go to see God sporadically
with a heartbreaking alertness
of the fleeting time.
Is it a metaphysical quest
booming around like a
groping fish
squirming away from life
in detached stillness
ignoring the reflex!!
A smile plays in my bloodstream, God within,
like moonlit amuses itself
on a running stream.

My heart is a monument.
I have the world's shared-dream
of waiting for someone
to ascend to his greatness
whom I have placed
in a pedestal.
I am
the victim of my own optimism.
I am woman. I am
the mirage.
Life hangs on.
Like a lone thorny tree
standing all alone dry
on the distant horizon
in the desert
spoofing the dappled sky. □

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Advice

* Pitambar Tarai

You say, today is an auspicious day.
On such a day,
One should recite a couplet or so from Bhima
Bhoi or Saria poor,
Must consume pious food, bear compassion in mind
And if possible,
A pilgrimage to Puri or Prayag would be a better kind.

What to speak of prayer, food, or mind?
Ours is but petty ordinary lives
Of hunger, alms and rags;
Thousands of *Bhima Bhoi* rattles in our brittle bones,
Soaking every vein with their melancholic music.
Hundreds of *Saria* live under the shades of hapless hearts
And can drink only a palmful of rice-water or so
As alms when they find.

We can't live here, as you suggest,
In the midst of such a life stream,
Carrying shame on faces,
And burying hunger in stomachs.

We the despicable can't bear
This strange realm's burden
With our heads bowed down.

We can't commit ourselves to truth.
We are the vulnerable cows
Treading on jungles and scared of the tigers' paws.
We can't live tortoise-like
Recoiling repeatedly our cowardly lives.

We can't afford the illusive run of *Ramachandra*
After an agile and alert golden deer
Playing hide and seek.
So far, we have had a life of ideals and advices.
Like soft clouds,
We have immersed ourselves

Into the fog of false promises.
We are the flowers of tender grass
Do not dictate us
How we should live the rest of our fragile lives.

Know that we, the slaughtered trees
Intricately crafted in the multistoried mansions,
Seek to be alive again;
We, the mountainous heaps of rice
On your threshing floors
Want to be unleashed;
Swarms of fish are we
Crying for mothers' milk and the shield of our fathers.
We are the bricks and stones of temples and mosques
Desperate to be freed from the dictates of scriptures.

We are the innocent multitudes,
The ill fates of whose try to abstain
From rules, offices, courts and their corridors.
To accept or reject the 'ten un-Dalit incarnations'
To decide whom to embrace-
Rama or *Ravana*, *M.K. Gandhi* or *Ambedkar,*
To read the *Gita* or the *Koran,*
To decide which salt is suitable for our body,
And what to sow on our field-
Hybrid or native seeds,
Whom to marry – a washerwoman or a Bramhin lady-
Are all our private decisions.

Even if we visit *Srikshetra* on this day,
Do not say
Which comes first – mating or meeting the god, or
the heavenly gate there.
Do not advise which is right –
Fasting or carnal feasting, wine or women, or the
corridors' divine dust.
Let us live
And leave our ways to ourselves now. □

A SMILE

* Dr. Ishteyaque Shams

One carves for bread
Another for cloth and shade
One for a better life
Another for a beautiful wife.

Is this all in life?
No, not life is more than that
Life is to do good to others
For all in the world are brothers.

Make your presence meaningful
By doing something remarkable
Lead a happy and prosperous life
Give smile as much as possible.

Smile is most essential today
For it makes easier our way. □

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SUMMER 2010

* Gopini Karunakar

Summer that came after my daughter died
it's very sorrowful.
Wind doesn't flow and it's very sultry.
Not just the body, eyes and heart too perspire.

In such summer of an April month Sun, from the A.C. room of
mother's womb I tumbled into the Sun.
All the life is a mirage!
Within the moment of my forming a lease of life,
within the moment my daughter left her breath on my shoulders,
electricity comes and goes.

It's birth when the power came, gone it's death.
Life is just as long as the fan's spinning in a moment!
Still I like summer very much.
Jasmines, mangoes come in scorching sun.
Jasmines full in plait, I like her more.
Her lips, breasts, navel, thighs, feet
not just one? In the jasmine rain that showers from her tresses
the body becomes wet and fragrant.
Come summer she is like a full blown jasmine canopy.
As though jasmine incense sticks are lit, all the room
her fragrance spreads.
Just like incense powder sprinkled on coal fire
she pungently emits smoke.
Just like the jasmine creeper entwines the canopy,
with strong thighs, hands, raised chest, curvaceous
six pack body, like a python
entwines a tree, I arrest her in arms.
At that time she emits fragrance like a broken jasmine scent bottle.
Dabbing that scent to my body and heart.

I give out fragrance for a life time.
Her breasts like ripen mangoes, or
ripen mangoes like her breasts, truly the ambrosial fruits!
Don't like to out the mango fruit into pieces.
Pressing the fruit with both the hands, biting the tip gently,
Slurping! And that taste is different!
Hardship or happiness one has to
slurp life greedily. Mustn't be made to pieces.
This summer that came after my baby died,
is burning with the agonies of womb.
This time spring simply came and went away.
Jasmine bed didn't sprout and bud.
Mango tree didn't flourish with flower and fruit.
Jasmine bed like, and mango tree like we
Even after the coming and leaving of spring, still didn't sprout.
Having shed leaves we are barren.□

Translated from Telugu by Dr. K. Padmaja, Asst. Prof of English at S.K.R. Govt. Degree College, Gudur, Andhra Pradesh.

and the Last Paper

Developing Reference Skills through Task-Based Approach

* S. Sivaraja Pillai

Reading knowledge of English is the most wanted skill to pursue studies. EFL courses aim at the development of this skill. But often these courses concentrate exclusively on helping the learners cope with texts. They forget to help them develop the reference skills they need when selecting texts or books in a library and deciding whether the contents are relevant to their needs; looking up reference in an index or bibliography; consulting a dictionary or encyclopedia.

It has been a notion that an EFL course is not necessary to practice reference skills. Some may argue that the learners develop them when reading their own language. There are many problems and that main one is lack of confidence. Learners should try looking up an index entry or scanning the table of contents of a book written in a foreign language they do not know very well. It needs confidence to scan the page to sift the relevant from the irrelevant. Confidence can only be built up through practice. This paper intends to introduce the ways in which learners' reference skills can be developed.

To read efficiently student will also need to become familiar with printing and writing conventions that differ from those used in books in their own country. For instance, the table of contents may be in a different part of the book; layout and referencing convention may be different; a large number of abbreviations may need to be learned. Students whose mother tongue uses a different set of graphic symbols from English will have the additional problem of mastering English alphabetical order.

In Study Skills for Students of English as a Second Language Richard Yorkey gives examples of exercises that can be used to give practice in reference skills. At the British Council English Language Teaching Institute (ELTI), London, they have devised reference skills practice materials, based on one of Yorkey's exercise types, for postgraduate students on study skills courses.

The materials are designed for self-access so that students can work

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on their own, at their own pace, and without the need for teacher-supervision. They can also select exercises that are appropriate to their linguistic level and that are relevant to their particular academic fields. The exercises cover table of contents, indexes, bibliographies, dictionaries, and the interpretation of information conveyed by graphs, diagrams tables.

As in Example 1, each exercise consists of a Workcard, with Answers on the back and multiple copies of a Worksheet on which the student records his answers. The Workcard either consists of a photocopy of an extract from a journal or book or refers the student to a particular source or information, such as the Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary, the Penguin Dictionary of Economics etc. It is important that the source data is authentic and photocopying is preferable to copy-typing. The original typography and lay-out are retained and so the student's study conditions are better simulated.

The Workcards kept in a central file. At the front of it is a table of contents which lists the units and gives the number and title of each exercise:

Unit 1 : CONTENTS

1.1 How to survive the Slump
1.2 Europe and the Common Market
1.3 The Penguin book of the Natural world etc

Unit 2 : INDEX

2.1 Understanding Society
2.2 The Science Century
2.3 A History of Invention

Unit 3 : BIBLIOGRAPHY

3.1 New Lives, New Landscapes
3.2 After Silent Spring
3.3 Physics of the Earth

Unit 4 : DICTIONARIES

4.1 Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary – Locating Words and Meanings
4.2 Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary – Writing English
4.3 Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary – Speaking English

Unit 5 : GRAPHS AND TABLES

5.1 Britain in Figures : Planning for Leisure
5.2 Britain in Figures : Education
5.3 Facts in Focus : Social Security etc

Each unit is colour – coded. Thus the Workcards and Worksheets in Unit 2 for instance aer all green, while those in Unit 3 are all yellow.

On the top cover of the file, below the title 'Reference Skills', are instructions

for the students:

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Look at the Table of Contents at the front of this file. Select the exercise you would like to do.
2. Take the appropriate WORKCARD from this file.
3. Find the corresponding WORKSHEET in the filing cabinet drawers marked 'Reference Skills'.

The Students open the file and skims through Table of Contents to select an exercise. Alternatively he may have been advised by a teacher to work at a particular exercise. He then takes the appropriate Workcard from the file and finds the corresponding Worksheet in filling cabinet. When he has finished answering the questions on the Worksheet he compares his answers with the answers in the back of the Workcard. If any of his answers are wrong he should look at the questions again. If he still has problems he can consult a teacher.

Most of the exercises in Unit 4 (DICTIONARIES) are designed to teach the student how to use a particular dictionary as well as give him practice in consulting it. The exercises in the other units are essentially practice exercise and the student is encouraged to work as quickly as possible. Instructions on the Worksheet tell him to note the time it takes him to complete the exercise; he can then compare this time with that of a native speaker by consulting a list at the front of the central file. This timing serves a useful purpose. A student may answer all the questing correctly and think that he has no more need to practise.

Questions on the Worksheet could lead him to find answers in the text or in illustrations through index references. If the student can visit an open-access library, the first task on the Worksheet could require him to look up the library catalogue and find the book on the shelf. Exercises can also be devised which require the student to collate information from a variety of sources and through several references. □

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