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PRAGATI'S ENGLISH JOURNAL

ISSN 0975-4091

Editor : Dr. N. K. Neb

**Editorial Advisory Board : Dr. Gurupdesb Singh
: Dr. Kulbhushan Kushal**

Approved for College Libraries by DPI Colleges, Punjab &
Chandigarh vide letter No.5\6-2006, dated 16-3-2006

website: www.englishjournal.in

Vol. 10. No. 2

December 2010

Typesetting :
Krishna Lazer Graphics
Jalandhar.

Printed by :
Paper Offset Printers
Jalandhar.

continued from the previous issues..

The depiction of certain forms of life through the use of a marginalized consciousness has emerged as another narrative method in recent times. It highlights indeterminacy of meaning and contests unitary nature of reality providing multiple interpretations of the same experience. For this purpose the writers either use a woman or a socially oppressed character or a person belonging to some marginalized ethnic group as narrator and present the fictional experiences through his or her perspective. The use of such a narrator along with the presentation of multiple perspectives tends to contest established views about different historical events and social practices such as the incidents related to Indian struggle for Independence, partition of India, the happenings related to contemporary history and the treatment of marginalized social classes like *dalits* and women. The use of multiple perspectives contesting established understanding of history develops a kind of fictional history instead of historical fiction that earlier treated historical reality in fiction. The critical appreciation of such writings is more an exercise in exploring multiple possible implications of different happenings and experiences and their nuances rather than their accepted reality. For example, Rohinton Mistry's novel *Family Matters*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, Amrita Kumar's *Damage*, Githa Hariharan's *Fugitive Histories* and Shashi Deshpande's *In The Country of Deceit*, present contemporary ethnic conflicts through the consciousness of marginalized narrator \character. The way these novels develop marks the emergence of topical fiction in which there is much concentration on the topic than the happenings or the characters.

Another feature of contemporary fiction is the use of narrative voice that tends to disrupt the sense of acceptance of the authority of the writer or the narrator's views. Earlier the authorial voice was considered all inclusive whereas contemporary narratives present the authorial views as one of them multiple perspectives expressed in a work of art. It marks a challenge to the omniscient narrator and paves way for the role of the narrator and the reader. Now a reader is no longer supposed to be guided by the author to make sense of the world created by him. The reader has to exercise his\her own critical faculty to award meaning to the world he comes across in a work of art. As the nature of the world and its meaning is no longer fixed, the emphasis now shifts from what kind of a world has been created to how it has been created and how it gains significance for different readers

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The inclusion of different elements of other art forms such as films, diary entries newspaper reports and factual historical details forms a part of the emerging modes of narratives. These elements contest the canonical view of literature and add to the variety and complexity of these fictional writings. The inclusion of anthropological research -oriented material in Amitav Gosh's novel and the use of such elements in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* form the examples of such narratives. The disruption in the linear development of the fictional discourse through the insertion of these elements makes these writings a collage of different art forms and marks a rejection of the purity of genres. Consequently, these fictional works develop in the form of an arrangement of different micro-narratives that tend to be individually significant apart from their relevance in the total scheme of the work. This aspect of contemporary fiction brings the narrative design closer to the epical form of writing where we find story within the story.

The presentation of different images of life in sudden flashes like advertisements and media-generated images marks the proximity of fictional works with different forms of visual arts. There is a quick succession of images that appear in the novels like Khushwant Singh's *Delhi* and *In The Company of Women* and almost all the novels of Shobha De except *Second Thoughts*. Different characters and incidents in these novels appear like series of scenes on a cinema screen. These narrative forms help capture the flippant nature of contemporary reality. Instead of concentrating on the major happenings in the life of one or two characters, these writings express the diverse forms of life that one finds in contemporary globalized world.

The fictional narratives concentrating on different aspects of contemporary happenings having political or historical significance mark a lack of temporal and spatial movement that informed the writings of earlier fiction writers. Instead of their progress like a Bildungsroman novel, we find here interaction and responses at the inter-personal and inter-ethnic levels or the multiplicity of responses to certain incidents. It is particularly so in the novels related to the incidents like Ram Janambhoomi\ Babri Masjid conflict or the narratives concerning ethnic problems. Similarly, the novels by most of contemporary women writers register a gradual development in the awareness of women characters about their marginalized position in society instead of a temporal or spatial movement. Consequently, the fictional details often remain limited to interpersonal relations, particularly of the women characters in different situations.

The spurt of writings concerning the life and lifestyle of the people at the fringe side of the mainstream involving gays and lesbians

informs the use of certain narrative modes that suit their fictional design. These writings involve the narration of incidents involving sexual escapades of these marginalized groups of society and the insertion of the arguments that support their struggle for acceptance in the mainstream. The way the fictional discourse develops in some of these writings shows how these writers use the depiction of unusual surroundings, traditionally unacceptable forms of sexual behaviour to make their works popular. A special feature of these writings is the recurrence of similar incidents involving physical interaction. Shobha De's novel *A Strange Obsession* and Raj Rao's recently published novel *Room No. 131* make abundant use of these strategies. The inclusion of sensational titillating and striking details about sexual behaviour also forms a part of narrative elements in a number of other novels. Even the novelists who do not directly treat sexual behaviour in their works use these elements in their works. Shahsi Tharoor's *Riot* and Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* are the apparent examples of such works.

The diasporic fictional writings emerge as another sub-genre of English fiction. They concentrate on the expression of the problems of the displaced, rootless and exiled people who experience a sense of unbelonging, discrimination and homelessness. The narrative devices in these writings involve the presentation of the situations, usually in an alien land, where cross-cultural interaction takes place. These situations are used to show the discrimination that the immigrants have to face in their adopted homes. Some other elements of these writings include the depiction of the displaced people's mental journey to home land, their cherishing a glorified view of their past, their sense of isolation, the ways these people adopt to settle in an alien land. It also involves the presentation of the details about the food habits, cultural traits and difference in colour that pronounce the cultural difference.

The expression of variety, complexity and emerging patterns of globalized, multicultural reality forms a noteworthy feature of contemporary Indian English fiction. It also informs a shift in the paradigms of understanding reality and its artistic presentation. A corresponding shift in the narrative devices certainly marks a notable development in the art of story-telling. These developments in this form are, no doubt, related to the cultural dynamics that has resulted in a decisive change in the material reality and the philosophical perspectives and world views that have destabilized our earlier beliefs, thoughts and perceptions.

Writing Nature: Eco-critical Perspectives in Temsula Ao's Poetry

*Indu Swami **

Temsula Ao is a famous poet from the geographical as well as socio-cultural location of the Northeastern part of India. This is a region with a unique natural background. With the Himalayas extending its ranges in the northern part of this region and also dotted with other medium and small hill ranges, Northeast of India is famous not only for its flora and fauna but also for its unique ethnic cultural varieties. Coming from such an area, Temsula Ao, belonging to the Ao-Naga tribes, speaks of the relationship of her community with the nature and natural forces, which are bountiful. Caught in the present historical moment, the community finds itself in conflicting ideologies. Deeply rooted as the members of the community are in their own history and ethnic culture, they also have encountered invasion of Christianity and different forms of modernity. As a result, the interface between the historical roots and the imposition of Christian religious norms from outside is a site for ambiguity in general and a dilemma that deals a severe blow to their identity. As we shall see in the next few pages, the twin forces of Western philosophy and dissemination of Christian norms have unsettled them and generated an anxiety that has its roots in the displacement of the old indigenous cultural norms that privilege nature and natural forms.

In Ao-Naga myth and philosophy, traditional rites and rituals, history and culture, nature is an indispensable element. This gives them a unique identity. Temsula Ao vehemently responds to the loss of the ecology of the Northeast region – deforestation, species extinction, loss of agricultural land, loss of natural habitat. The tribal identity has been intricately associated with the flora and fauna that so long prospered in abundance in their region. Consequently, an anxiety of the loss of identity resulting from the loss of ecology pervades her poems. It is because of this anxiety that she is after a desperate quest for identity, more appropriately her tribal identity. The poetry of Temsula Ao, exemplifies a yearning for a return to a pure traditional Ao-Naga livelihood, but since such a return is threatened by the corrosion of

traditional culture, the resultant anxiety pervades a predominant melancholic undertone. This article attempts to discuss certain issues like the changing cultural ethnoscape, the corrosion of the environmental philosophy that is manifested in variegated forms in the modes and mores, rites and rituals, myths and mysteries, and invading urbanity in the landscape of the Northeast. The agents of change, dominant of which are Christianity, urbanization, and industrialization, bring about such corrosion.

Temsula Ao, the sentinel of Ao-Naga culture, is a nature poet, in whose poetry an elegiac mood lamenting the loss of ecology is predominant. The loss of the verdant bountiful nature is expressed in a desperate tone in her poem “Lament for Earth” included in *Songs that Tell* (1988). In this poem she first creates a harmonious and blissful image of rural idyll that existed in the past and then challenges it with an image of the chaotic present. The unique poetic device of alternate use of literary genres like pastoral and apocalypse effectively brings out the crisis.

Once upon an earth
There was a forest,
Verdant, virgin, vibrant
With tall trees
In majestic splendour
Their canopy
Unpenetrated
Even by the mighty sun,
The stillness humming
With birds' cries.
(Ao, 1998: 1-10)

It may be noted that Rachel Carson too, in *Silent Spring* (1962) uses a similar technique. “A Fable for Tomorrow”, the first chapter of *Silent Spring*, begins with the words, “There *was once* a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony of its surroundings” (Carson, 1962: 21; emphasis added).

Similarly, Ao begins the poem by constructing an idyllic picturesque image of a land that existed in an indefinite and uncertain (“Once upon”) epoch. She transports the readers from the present to a past, which is starkly different from the present and creates an illusion of changelessness. Ao’s construction is deeply informed by the fact that the past that she is attempting to rescue poetically is invariably lost.

She reflects upon the impressiveness of the forest. This desire to rescue the once “[v]erdant, virgin, vibrant” forest points out the presence of a complex reality. She celebrates the thickness or denseness of the forest and highlights the predominance and primordality of nature. The sunrays could not enter through the dense forest; therefore, it is inevitable that the forest is dark. For Ao the darkness of the forest is devoid of any negative implication. She departs from Christian attitude towards forest. In Christian imagination, the forest is “dark” because it is devoid of God’s light and filled with terror, sinfulness, confusion, moral degeneration, transgression, and horror. The forest is a moral allegory constructed by Christendom in order to evoke fear, terror, and horror; it marks the beginning of an infernal world ordained for the transgressors of Christianity. Harrison argues, “When forests become allegorical they already become treacherous; but when the allegory is theological . . . they become even more so” (Harrison, 1992: 81). But Ao finds a “majestic splendour” in the forest. She presents a blissful harmonious relationship between nature and animals: “Little creatures / Frolicking / From earth to sky” (Ao, 1998: 11-13). In this stanza, Ao attempts to create a non-human world where the intrinsic value of nature is fully realized because it is devoid of any nature/culture dualism. For Ao the forest has life and this life of the forest is life for her.

In the next stanza, Ao, like Carson, shatters the image of a serene rural idyll by introducing the agent of change that is both threatening and transforming nature. Ao introduces the dualism of nature/culture in this stanza in order to show that the change that now takes place is anthropogenic. For Carson the agent of change was the pesticide fallout. In Ao’s tribal culture nature has invariably received primacy, but after the advent of modern civilization with sophisticated technological innovations—“lorries” (Ao, 1998: 28), “mills” (Ao, 1998: 30), “bomb” (Ao, 1998: 60), “bleaching powder” (Ao, 1998: 61) – she finds earth or nature to be “ravaged / Stripped of her lushness / And her sap / Her countenance / Furrowed and damaged / Like a fading beauty” (Ao, 1998: 64-69). The idyllic charm of the first stanza gives way to numerous forms of crisis like deforestation, endangerment of fisheries and animal species, disposal of toxic wastes, loss of agricultural land, water pollution that now takes place against nature. The forest is silent because no birds sing there due to their loss of natural habitat as a consequence of deforestation. The silence of the forest that Ao

speaks about ?“Alas for the forest / Which now lies silent” (Ao, 1998: 21-22) ? coincides with Carson’s similar apprehension of silence that might prevail in the ‘spring’ due to the loss of birdsong which “comes to function as a synecdoche for a more general environmental apocalypse” (Garrard, 2004: 2). Carson’s apprehension was articulated in the context of global pesticide fallout. Ao’s apprehension results from her ecological anxiety. Ao projects the denial of the intrinsic value of nature in modern times where a spiritual connection between man and nature is not possible. A fragmented and mechanized view replaces the holistic and organic view of nature of the first stanza. Nature is reduced to a raw material fed by capitalist ideology, which recklessly manifests the Cartesian scientific outlook of mastery over nature.

In the third stanza, like the first, she again uses the metaphor of pastoral in order to underscore the intrinsic value of nature in its uncontaminated form. In the fourth stanza, like the second, she describes the anthropogenic agent of change and authoritatively employs the metaphor of apocalypse, which she only hints at in the second stanza. She finds no scope for survival if the crisis aggravates: “No life stirs in her belly now” (Ao, 1998: 59). The temporality of this apocalyptic metaphor ends in the final stanza of the poem: “Grieve for the rape of an earth / That was once verdant, vibrant / Virgin” (Ao, 1998: 80-82). Through the word, “Grieve” Ao is evoking a very tragic moment caused by the anticipation or experience of death. She also uses the adverb “once” to refer to a period in the past in order to emphasize the present, which is predominantly grievous. Following the argument of Stephen O’Leary, we can observe that Ao’s use of the time frame is tragic where the conclusion is catastrophic without any hope for positive redemption. In tragic time frame, observes O’Leary the “mechanism of redemption is victimage, its plot moves inexorably towards sacrifice and the ‘cult of the kill’” (O’Leary, 1994: 68). She uses the metaphor of apocalypse “not to experience, rather to preclude through persuasive means the undesirable doom” (Chakraborty, 2009: 26). The anthropogenic assault on the purity of nature is described dialectically through “virgin” and “rape”. It is also discernable that Ao’s conception of nature is intrinsically feminine. She is referring to the reckless and indiscriminate despoiling of feminine nature by culture that is influenced by capitalist ideals. What she is actually intending is to establish a balanced relation between culture and nature, and to reclaim the spiritual

connection between nature and her tribal culture which is affected by materialism and consumerism.

This same technique of shifting between past and present finds expression in the poem “The Bald Giant” from the collection *Songs from Here and There* (2003). Unlike “Lament for Earth,” the construction of the idyll comes in the third and fourth stanza of the poem. In the first stanza, the poet is perplexed, worried and anxious because of the “sorry sight” (Ao, 2003: 6) of the indiscriminate felling of trees, which is exposing the mountain ridge. From this despondent personal mood, she transports the readers to the variegated sights and shades of an uncontaminated pastoral of blissful idyllic charm in the second and third stanza. In summer, the mountain is lush green with new leaves, in autumn, it turns golden with falling leaves and in winter, it becomes white with snow. With the change of season, the colour of the landscape also changes. Ao gives meticulous topographical details of the pastoral landscape, but the present loss of ecology shocks her and she laments the loss:

All that is now gone
All of him is brown
From base to crown
And his sides are furrowed
Where the logs had rolled.
(Ao, 2003: 19-23)

The idyllic colourful mountain has lost its mesmeric charm; it has become thoroughly brown. The “brown” colour of the mountain exposes a potential ecological crisis. It points at the magnitude in which deforestation is taking place. The trees are now converted into timber—“the logs had rolled” (Ao, 2003: 23)—and, hence “there can be only the claims of human mastery and possession of nature?the reduction of forests to utility” (Harrison, 1992: 121). Ao ends the poem very shockingly. She describes her present mental state, when her former “friendly” (Ao, 2003: 24) mountain becomes a “menacing” (Ao, 2003: 25) threat. Her hills, called home, now threaten her: “I resent his presence / In my horizon” (Ao, 2003: 26-27). Ao ends the poem anticipating a catastrophic destruction. She uses the metaphor of apocalypse: “He will surely disintegrate / And carry me to our common doom” (Ao, 2003: 30-31). Again, the time frame is tragic without any hope for redemption. Ao uses both pastoral and apocalyptic rhetoric in

order to establish the intensity of the anthropogenic attack on nature. Through this alternative use of pastoral and apocalypse, Ao very effectively presents the shift from former organic worldview to a modern mechanistic one.

In the poem “My Hills”, Ao is disturbed with the changing landscape of the hills due to the expansion of industrialization and urbanization. In the title, she adds a possessive determiner not with the Cartesian desire to possess nature but to express her closeness with nature. The sublimated wilderness of “Lesson of the Mountain” now collides with rampant urbanization and material progression in “My Hills”. The problem that Ao is exposing is that reckless urbanization will not even spare the wilderness. The loss of the wilderness brings about persistent problem of loss of biodiversity and seasonal abnormality in the region.

Ao in the poem “The Old Story-Teller” from *Songs from the Other Life* (2007) considers the oral narratives to be her “life-force” (Ao, 2007: 12). Such oral narratives consolidate the ground for “the formation of a communal narrative memory” (Garrard, 2004: 126). Regarding the significance of the oral narratives among the ‘native’ writers, Martin Padgett, in his article “Native American Fiction,” observes: “Much oral storytelling conveys a religious sensibility that stresses ideals of reciprocity, wholeness and beauty and so expresses a deep sense of attachment between a people and the land they inhabit” (qtd. in Garrard, 2004: 126). Padgett’s observation on the role oral narratives play in community formation among the native Americans can be extended to the Ao-Naga culture. As Ao emphatically observes, in the context of her own people, the oral tradition is intricately interwoven with the culture of her own people and this “intricate interweaving” plays a “vital role in their lives” (Ao, 1999: ii). She extends this point to conclude, “for the AOs ‘folklore *is* culture’ and ‘culture *is* folklore” (Ao, 1999: ii; emphasizes original). It is clear that in Ao-Naga oral tradition nature holds the centre stage. In the poem “The Old Story-Teller”, which is an attempt to revive the old oral narrative pattern of the culture that is now on the decline, nature is foregrounded and it appears with all its ethnic diversities, thereby making it unique. Nature in its different manifestations appears in the poem. Ao refers to the tradition of worshipping of the different “forces of nature” (Ao, 1999: 20) among the Ao-Nagas because “[i]n the Ao Pantheon, there is

mention of a number of gods or *Tsungrems*. Such gods are believed to reside in huge trees, mountains, rivers, caves etc.” (Ao, 1999: 78).

In her poem “Blood of Other Days” included in the volume *Songs from the Other Life* (2007) the unique nature of her culture is brought out. Though Christianity became their religion, it could not properly address the tribal cultural concerns. It destroyed the tribal proximity to nature, which was a lived experience for them. Nature was philosophically part of their life and there was no dualism here. Tribal rites and rituals marked this proximity. Ao scathingly criticizes Christianity for instrumentally denouncing their tribal religion as pagan. She brings out the conflict between Christianity and her own tribal religion:

We believed that our gods lived
In the various forms of nature
Whom we worshipped
With unquestioning faith.
Then came a tribe of strangers
Into our primordial territories
Armed with only a Book and
Promises of a land called Heaven.
Declaring that our Trees and Mountains
Rocks and Rivers were no Gods
And that our songs and stories
Nothing but tedious primitive nonsense.
(Ao, 2007: 9-20)

Christianity considers worshipping of trees and stones as a practice of idolatry performed by pagans. Christianity “often saw pagan place and nature reverence as its main enemy, and set itself the task of destroying pagan shrines or absorbing them into its own framework of transcendence” (Plumwood, 2002: 219). The proselytizing of these tribes into Christianity has resulted in the loss of connection of these tribes with the natural elements like “Trees”, “Mountains”, “Rocks”, and “Rivers.” And this in its turn has oriented them to a more objective understanding of nature, eventually succumbing to a more materialistic pursuit than a spiritual one. For Ao spirituality is not in the land of the Heaven but in different forms of nature like “Trees”, “Mountains”, “Rocks”, and “Rivers”. It is interesting to note that Ao has capitalized these words in order to affirm their importance and significance in her tribal culture. The central proposition of spirituality begins from realizing

the presence of the “spirit” within the self and a communion of the self with the elements of nature. In “Blood of Other Days”, Ao describes the spiritual affliction and distortion resulting from Christian insistence on only the Western form of worshipping, in the process creating a dualistic structure of hierarchy where the tribal form is subordinated and colonized. The tribal culture is worst affected by this: “We no longer dared to sing / Our old songs in worship / To familiar spirits of the land . . .” (Ao, 2007: 25-27). The living forests of the tribes lost its significance and gradually became “silent forests” (Ao, 2007: 30); similarly, the “soul-mountains” (Ao, 2007: 35) also lost its significance only to become “tiny ant-hill” (Ao, 2007: 36). The appropriation of Christian idioms into the autochthonous life patterns of the tribes has severed their connection with nature:

We borrowed their minds,
 Aped their manners,
 Adopted their gods
 And became perfect mimics.
 (Ao, 2007: 45-48)

This is nothing but a case of subordination and appropriation of a foreign culture in a coercive condition – the subordinated culture is clearly under duress. The words “borrowed” and “mimics” poignantly express Ao’s lament for the loss of the originality and integrity of their culture. It points at the interference of cultural norms, which is quite obviously different from their own. The belief in the presence of the “spirit” in the natural elements suffered an immense blow during the process of appropriation of Christian ideals. They are proselytized to believe in the Christian concept of salvation “by the promise of a new heaven” (Ao, 2007: 44) where the morally good soul or spirit will be united with god in an eternal life. Therefore, for a fallen creature like man, the human body and the earthly world of nature with “Trees”, “Mountains”, “Rocks”, and “Rivers” become a prison where the spirit is entrapped into the matter. Plumwood observes, “for most of the history of Christianity the tendency to view the material world as alienated, as evil, or as having at best meaning and significance as an instrument to a separate higher spiritual realm, has triumphed” (Plumwood, 1993: 106). Tamsula Ao consolidates the integrity of Ao-tribal community. The observation that Garrard made about the indigenous people of America is also applicable to the context of the Ao-Nagas:

7

Native writers assume a certain responsibility to bear witness to their history in their writing, countering the distortions and suppressions of the dominant culture.
 (Garrard, 2004: 126)

Our contemporary ecological crisis is not simply an ecological crisis produced by industrialization and materialist urge to exploit nature but a post-bellum crisis exposing our philosophical rootlessness and existential dilemma. If modern civilized man can dissolve his ego and take a humble step to adopt the simple tribal philosophy of closeness to the source of sustenance then his attitude towards nature can be changed, and a platform for a complex negotiation between nature and culture can take place. In order to do that, we need to realize the source from where our means of sustenance comes. The realization of the presence of the spirit is needed; however, for that we need not be avowedly religious, because one can be spiritual even outside institutionalized religion. Spirituality is also not a monolithic concept; there are many aspects and facets of spirituality. What kind of spirituality should then be adopted that can help establish a harmonious relationship with nature? Is there any hope?

In the tenth chapter in *Environmental Culture* entitled “Towards a materialist spirituality of place”, Plumwood explores spirituality for a possible solution to the ecological crisis of reason. She takes into consideration the problem of generalization of spirituality and exposes the challenges and complexity that abound the concept of spirituality. She believes that spirituality is the “answer” but is not sure of the specific kind of spirituality that should be adopted in order to come out of the ecological crisis. Plumwood, eventually, finds insights in the concept of spirituality in the article “Animal, Vegetable and Mineral: The Sacred Connection” by the Native American writer Carol Lee Sanchez. Plumwood observes:

Sanchez’ ‘Tribal’ spirituality is counter-hegemonic, resisting the hubris and blind spots of human-centredness and human self-enclosure, and rejecting the use/respect dualisms and spiritual remoteness of dominant Christian-rationalist spirituality.

(Plumwood, 2002: 224) The insight that Plumwood finds in Sanchez is also perceptible in Tamsula Ao when she writes: “Our racial wisdom has always

extolled the virtue of human beings living at peace with themselves and in harmony with nature and with our neighbours” (Ao, 2007, *These Hills...*: xi).

This comment of Ao claims to review from a fresh perspective man’s relation not only with nature but with his neighbours also. It asks us to review our dealing with our dwelling. In the Ao-tribal autochthonous life patterns, there is a kind of earth friendly; land based spiritual closeness that provides hope of regaining the blissful world of environment. Temsula Ao is desperately attempting to reclaim her autochthonous tribal culture by filtering out the elements that have permeated and contaminated her culture as a result of cultural encounters at specific moments of history. Ao’s poems are set beyond theological contexts, and she does not falter to criticize religion. However, she is not building up a consensus against religion as such. Ao’s poetry is not political; rather it initiates the reader to take a political stance of environmental activism protesting against the loss of biodiversity of the region. She is painstakingly pointing out the agent of change and cultural processes that are taking active role in transforming the verdant landscape into an industrialized, urbanite one. Christianity too contributes to this, as we have seen, by ignoring the ‘spirituality’ that lay embedded in the tribal cultures of the region, a kind of spirituality that combines human life with nature, with the flora and fauna, in the process creating a dynamic chain of mutual sustenance.

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Reflections on

Contemporary Indian English Fiction

(Ed:Kulbhushan Kushal &N.K.Neb)Nirman Publications

The forthcoming book includes critical articles on *Inheritance of Loss, The Namesake, The Immigrant, Riot, The Glass Palace, The Shadow Lines, A Matter of Time, The God of Small Things, Magic Seeds, Cracking India, Family Matters, The Serpent and The Rope* and the Fictional World of Shobha De. The "Introduction" provides an overview of the different developments in the evolving form of Indian English fiction and the paradigm shift involving its study. The book includes extremely useful insights about a number of theoretical perspectives used for the analysis of literary works, particularly fiction.

Human Values and Present Times: A Study of Kulbhushan Kushal's *Whirlpool of Echoes* and *Songs of Silence*

Geeta Goyal*

Geeta Jaiswal**

Literature, whatever its genre, mirrors the prevailing conditions in a society and yet remains relevant for all times to come. Western as well as Indian writers, through the spectrum of their work, have subtly explored the grim realities existing around them and many of them have tried to provide pattern and meaning to an otherwise complex, absurd or imperfect life. Novels of Dickens and Thackeray with focus on the industrial problems or urban vanities offer sinister vision of city life which needs to be humanized. Writers like Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee, Sunetra Gupta, Jhumpa Lahiri have used human relationships to enter into human consciousness in the diasporic condition of being. Thus, whereas Eliot depicts London as a spiritual wasteland presenting the broken modern life, Auden reveals the sloth and sprawling waste of the British society of his time and Arnold laments on hearing the melancholic and withdrawing roar of the sea of faith in modern times. There has been the sharp awareness of the corroding effects of modern metropolis and monstrous industry on ethical as well as moral values leading to rising concept of consumerism. The theme of de-escalating values has been one of the perennial subjects of literature of all ages. Whether it is the depiction of London, British, American, Canadian or Indian society, one thing common despite all the cracks and fissures, is the upholding of nobler and finer values which still hold a society or a nation together. Ultimately all the writers lay emphasis on the acceptance of goodness and adoption of ethical, moral, secular and human values by discarding evil, accepting and celebrating life.

Kulbhushan Kushal's collections of poems, '*Songs of Silence*' and '*Whirlpool of Echoes*' too examine social and ethical changes taking place in contemporary world. Kushal probes the basic causes of the modern malaise, escapes from the nemesis of materialistic civilization and pleads for fundamental basis of life. "Kushal's voice is unique in its

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sensitive concerns extending from social criticism to spiritual barrenness, familial ties to interpersonal relationships, philosophical riddles to environmental exploration" (Neb, 2008). Many of his poems register the mental and spiritual vacuum of modern man despite the advancement and progress and give a call for the change that has to come from within. One of the common elements one notices in the collections is the diminishing values and tendency of growing individualism all over the world. His poetry is "rife with a sensitive and sensible response to the ambush of the feelings-devoid culture of the modern or the post-modern era" (Phutela, 2008). Kulbhushan's Poetry shows his concern for fundamental questions related to human existence. He laments for the self-defeating attitude of ordinary people, their tendency to ignore the call of the conscience and their procrastinating and apathetic tendencies. "Time," "Time, the Thief," "Vanishing Fragrance," "Lustre Lost," "I feel sad," "I have a fear," "Burden," "Markets" are the poems depicting the new and changed pattern of life that threaten human values.

The poem "Time, the Thief" shows how hearts are without emotions and childhood without innocence in changing times. Gone are the days of serenity, solace and joy of spirituality as the onslaught of material progress and advancement has taken its toll. Presenting time as a great robber, the poet laments:

Time has stolen
Love from the hearts of mothers,
Search it in
The broken hearts
Of children
(Kushal, 2006)

Confusion has been created, faith has been shaken. Minds are without dreams, homes without peace and hearts without romance. Time has robbed man of his virtues and innate goodness. Related with the similar theme, "Vanishing Fragrance" too brings out the restlessness and uneasiness of man today. Man may appear to be more advanced, more civilized and more resourceful; he has lost his humanistic virtues. How fragrance of nobility and goodness has faded from our lives, relation graphs have lost their delight and simplicity has been replaced by artificiality – has been presented satirically in the lines:

Flowers are all fine
They have lost
Their fragrance
(WE 78)

Outwardly, one may appear to be happy and comfortable, but he is a broken soul leading a hollow and meaningless life. The poem, thus, portrays an inner split and diseased psyche of man who wanders about aimlessly in search of solace. The poet says:

The LIC premium
I have paid recently
Is a routine, Not a comfort (WE 79)

The poet wants to say that happiness cannot be travelled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed; rather it is felt from within. Look, for example, the following lines capturing man's indifference:

I have told my friends
I become a rock
Better you talk to me
Then you become a rock (WE 81)

Rock has been a constant symbol in Kushal's poems depicting the spiritual barrenness, insensitive/stony hearts and rough/coarse life style. One is reminded here of T.S. Eliot's 'The waste land' which emphatically presents the contemporary world of disease and decomposition, exhaustion and boredom, discord and disharmony. Kulbhushan Kushal's poems depict man's greed for material gains, and equate it with chasing mirage that never is realized. His sense of pain over moral decadence becomes clear when he says:

We have collected
Thousands of shining comforts
Promising heaven —
Freedom supreme
But they have robbed us of
Our brilliance, our shine (WE 50)

The image of 'robbing' goes with time as a great robber, discussed earlier when the poet says that time, the thief has stolen 'meaning from words' dreams from our minds' and 'leaves from trees'. This is the painful consciousness of the sickness, the fever and fret of contemporary world. Man's sitting in hotels/motels, singing songs of love and reading from scriptures again reveal his spiritual barrenness.

And everytime we are lost
Every afternoon
We feel that again
Another morning... (WE 50)

The lines above show man's mechanically following the same pattern, unmindful of the fact that he is only a loser. Similar theme has been taken up in the short poem, 'Burden'. The burden that man carries is the burden of confrontations and clashes may be on the basis of pride, ego, hatred, violence greed, caste, colour or creed. He cannot come out of the unpleasant memories of the past and is unable to lead a pure, serene or blissful life. 'A hollow life/ we carry on our heads... (Kushal, 2008). Similarly, in the poem, "I feel sad" the poet sorrowfully says,

In this season
Of murky dealings
And ruthless trade
Of elusive transactions
Where our net gains
Are in fact
Our invisible losses (WE 16-17)

In an ironic tone, the poet presents how noble and fine emotions are being replaced by mean and petty issues when he feels that the barometer is lovingly engaged in measuring 'the intensity of false promises' in present times. It also brings out the sensitive nature of the poetic self and his despair to see the sterility that has afflicted human relationships.

Another poem depicting present age and modern life style is "Market." Today man has become 'market addicted.' Resourceful persons are in a fix because of millions of schemes, options, packages and policies; resource less, however, are depressed the other way. The poem gives a view of the glamorous age of advertisements, role of print and electronic media for commercial ads, hiring icons and smiling stars, inviting and convincing the confused customers. Market symbolizes a world of artificiality and glamour. Ironically, the poet says:

Markets we are
Markets we live
God! Lead us
From market to home (SS 41)

'Home' here becomes symbolic of man's search for peace of mind, respite and relief. It is the modern man's predicament, confusion, dilemma and restlessness that form the main theme of the poem. Another poem depicting modern life style is "Times." Here man has

been shown as a great manipulator. A streak of satire runs all through the poem. Look, for instance, the following lines:

These are easy times
 These are gains without pains
 And there are pains with gains
 . . .
 These are scanners to scan the trust
 These are banners to pronounce bans
 These are easy times... (SS 73)

Living, of course, has become comfortable and easier, but only at the cost of simplicity. Distances might've been shortened, but distances in hearts have been widened. Relation dynamics is changing, definitions are changing, and values are disappearing. The eternal bond of love and unity is now missing for there are many homes within a single home, many cells, and many corners. Though man has acquired the capacity to melt the glaciers, the ability to communicate worldwide and the capability to shorten distances and manage disasters, yet the world is still bubbling over with promiscuity because codes of moral behavior that bound men together are fast vanishing. The poem "Hollow men" too depicts the degenerating tendencies in our lives. In modern life, man presumes, consumes and assumes quickly, calculates precisely, sells fast, buys late or vice versa because there are no parameters or ethics, for everything changes according to the situation—no fixed philosophy of life is followed.

We deface the faces
 We erase the traces
 . . .
 We bless gods
 We curse God
 We are not the hollow men (SS 72)

The phrase repeated at the end of every paragraph exposes the double standard of today's living. Satirically, the poet puts that we do all the mean things, get involved in immoral activities and petty trades, justify stale truths, but despite all these, "We are not hollow men," we lead a graceful life. Man thinks himself as civilized, well educated, well informed, well equipped, well planned, well prepared, but behind all these tags is hidden his real self — broken, treacherous, dishonest and selfish one.

Man's selfishness and hypocrisy has been further emphasized in poems like "Prayer," "Trees and Men," "Reluctant Sky" etc. While comparing him to a tree that stands with dignity, 'boasting of roots with shiny branches,' man's rootlessness has been focused. The poet says, man's "roots elude/And braches delude... Man's roots are / perhaps nowhere (SS 8)." Neither connected with past, nor having faith in future, he is leading a miserable life —rootless and baseless. This branching off from the roots spells doom for the once solid clan called society. The poet calls man 'alien' and 'alienated being' who claims earth as 'mother earth,' enjoys all the bounties, yet heartlessly pollutes it, harms and destroys it.

Thankless are our prayers
 And hollow is our gratitude
 We eat what you give
 And in turn we pollute
 Your heavenly stretch
 With our curses (SS 36)

Man's innate urge of getting connected with natural objects, joining the dance of fairies, stars, moon and sky and his modernist compulsions pushing him away from these blessings have been beautifully portrayed in the poem "Reluctant Sky." Man's materialistic urge has taken possession of his heart and soul and he no more is attracted towards these sublime objects of nature. He has been entrapped by dreams of power and glory. The poem is in a sort of conflict between natural and artificial, permanent and transitory. The poet says:

Sky advises me
 To go back to "Sangarma"
 To go back to the "Pipal" tree
 And to go back to the parrot
 I am confused.... (SS 42)

Thus, an analysis of poems from *Whirlpool of Echoes* and *Songs of Silence* reveals that Kulbhushan Kushal has adroitly explored the prevailing craze for the culture of consumerism coupled with erosion of moral and social values which has further caused the growth of individualism and vicissitudes in life. Apparently, the world is facing a cultural throe. These poems deal with issues related to modern man all over the world. The experience that man undergoes and the life that he lives today is leading to fractured relationships and moral depravity.

“Kushal’s worry about the loss of human values and humanistic concerns is evident in his poems that speak of the impact of modern technology and the changes that it has introduced in life” (Neb, 2008).

Nevertheless, despite a sense of pain and agony over fast crumbling values, lopsided stress on economism with little regard of culture, on material prosperity to the neglect of morality, on individualism at the expense of holism, the poet still looks forward to a society of balanced, sane and virtuous individuals having a sense of fellow-feeling and companionship, loyalty and devotion, which still hold a society together and therefore, find expression in literature of all periods. In that sense, his poetry gives the message “to make every effort to survive, not only survive but live the life to our best” (Bhagat, 2010). He still dreams for a happy future and hopes that rain will shower on hot deserts, trees will be full of birds. Moreover, the wars over boundaries will come to an end and new ideas and thoughts that work wonder will flow. He further dreams that ‘the books shall become baskets/ for the children/to play the ball’ (WE 55) and the rich will be kind and magnanimous for the poor and the destitute. That’s how he puts it:

I hope the next millennium
 Shall be millennium of hope
 A millennium of peace
 A millennium of poise
 Beyond noise (WE 85)

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Evolution of Shakespeare’s Doctrine of History: A Study of the Second Series of History Plays

*Sucheta Pathania**

Shakespeare’s imagination was steeped in historical sense and this sense of history continuously evolved from the first to the last of his works whether chronicles, comedies, tragedies or the last plays. It was during the writing of the second series of History Plays including *Richard II*, the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* that Shakespeare’s historical perspective developed. He demonstrated in these plays how the medieval feudal order was transformed into the new social order, which we today know and recognize as capitalism, but at that time was vaguely considered as the dawn of a new age of human progress.

The first series of History plays starting from the three parts of *Henry VI* and *King John* were written in the predominant Renaissance concept of history as a circular movement. The Reformation stressed the text that “Vengeance is mine” enjoining upon man not to take upon himself to punish the wrong doer because it was the province of providence to punish the sinner. There was another text which said that God punishes the sinner even in the third generation. From this the historians premised that if anybody committed the sin of sacrilege in removing or deposing God’s anointed king, he would be punished in the third generation. Applying this to British history it means that Henry IV, in deposing Richard II, was punished in the reign of Henry the sixth. This view of history informs the Henry VI plays. In this Shakespeare did not make any major deviation from the accepted Renaissance view of circular history. These plays belong to Shakespeare’s period of apprenticeship. The story is different with the next series of history plays.

Shakespeare lived in the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism. This tension between the two sets of values is projected in the English history series that Shakespeare wrote starting with *Richard II*. No author, however, objective and, however great a genius, can live out of the epoch in which he finds himself. It is as difficult to leave the social and moral milieu for an author as it is for a person to live out of his own body. Whether Shakespeare is writing about his own country’s

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early historical period or about Roman history or even Athenian countryside, he is, in fact, writing about his own age. His history plays, his comedies and tragedies project the Elizabethan dilemma and this is a measure of Shakespeare's maturity as an artist. Shakespeare is universal because he is particular in time and place. And his time and place are relevant to us because we live in a later stage of an epoch which was inaugurated and so accurately depicted by him. To study such a development *Richard II* is an appropriate locus to start our study.

One caveat is, however, in place. Shakespeare's age still used the terminology of feudalism though feudalism was already a passing phenomenon. Hence the terms of discourse in Shakespeare's History plays have to be understood in terms of feudal order which lasted in England from eleventh to the fourteenth century.

Feudalism is a social order organized around the relation of man to land. It is strictly hierarchical society in which there is firm division between the owners of land and those who work on the land. The bigger the landlord, the higher is his status. The king is at the top of the ladder, at the other end of which is the serf who does not possess land and hence has no rights. The social order is bound together by the principle of "degree."

The degree enjoins legality and this obligation is not one-sided but involves reciprocity. The king gives protection to the life and property of his subjects in return of which the subjects obey his order with an unquestioned loyalty. The position of a king is like that of a sun in the pre-Copernican solar system.

So, the king is, therefore, the cementing force and provides stability to the whole social order. The moral counterpart of feudalism is the code to chivalry where truth and honour are the highest terms. In the theory of feudalism there was a controversy whether the king was the first among equals or the creator of the social order who is above all other lords. In England the second theory was more predominant because of the historical fact that Henry of Mowbray gave lands to his followers after conquering England in 1066 and ousting the previous Anglo Saxon landowners. Any breach of these mutual obligations will therefore release forces of disintegration and evil.

Now reverting to *Richard II*, we find that the court of Richard II, in the first scene, is apparently a model of chivalrous propriety.

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Richard is the last of English kings who derives his authority from genuine succession. When the two contestants Bolingbroke and Mowbray appear before him to impeach each other's loyalty and truth, they appeal to their devotion to the king. Bolingbroke salutes the king:

Many years of happy days befall
My gracious sovereign, my most loving liege! (I. i. 20-21)

To which Mowbray adds.

Each day still better other's happiness;
Until the heavens, envying earth's good hap,
Add an immortal title to your crown. (I. i. 22-24)

However, when the two contestants in their zeal seem to go out of the prescribed etiquette in the violence of their charges and counter charges, Richard fails to exercise the discipline which is expected out of him. The king is reminded of his duty.

Rage must be withstood:
Give me his gage: lions make leopards tame. (I. i. 173-74)

The king, as the lion, must keep his flock of leopards within bounds if his rule is to be established. The reason why Richard fails to exercise his authority becomes clear from the nature of charges which Bolingbroke brings against his adversary. They include, apart from alleged embezzlement of certain sum of money, Mowbray's role in the murder of the Duke of Gloucester.

That the king is unable to face the situation and realizes the real drift of this charge is made clear when he says:

How high a pitch his resolution soars. (I. i. 109)
The lion has his claws pared and recognizes his inability to rule his house.
We were not born to sue, but to command;
Which since we cannot do to make you friends,
Be ready, as your lives shall answer it. (I. i. 196-98)

The implications of this scene are further worked out in a small scene which Shakespeare has sandwiched between the opening scene and the scene of the tournament at Coventry. From this play onwards this becomes Shakespeare's principle of structure. In this scene the Duchess of Gloucester appeals to her husband's brother John of Gaunt to get her justice. Gaunt makes it clear that he is helpless because king himself is implicated in the murder.

Since correction lieth in those hands
 Which made the fault that we cannot correct,
 Put we our quarrel to the will of heaven; (I. ii. 4-6)

The scene also evokes the memory of an ideal feudal state in the rule of King Edward:

Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
 Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
 Or seven fair branches springing from one root.(I. ii. 11-13)

Gaunt recognizes the justice of the plea of the Duchess but declares in round terms:

God's is the quarrel; for God's substitute,
 His deputy anointed in His sight,
 Hath caused his death: the which if wrongfully,
 Let heaven revenge. (I. ii. 38-40)

Thus we see that the chivalry of Richard's court has been contaminated at the very source. The king himself, who should have been the protector of the rights of the nobility, is implicated in the murder. The sin of Richard is further compounded by him by farming out his kingdom for meeting the expenses of his extravagant court. John of Gaunt at his deathbed roundly accuses him of destroying and laying waste his kingdom. He tells Richard that though physically Gaunt is very ill and dying, in a political sense it is Richard who is at his deathbed:

Now He that made me knows I see thee ill:
 Ill in myself to see, and in thee seeing ill
 Thy deathbed is no lesser than thy land,

 Landlord of England art thou now, not king.
 Thy state of law is bond slave to the law. (II. i. 93-95; 113-14)

By now it is clear that Richard's court has only the appearance of a highly brilliant and functional feudal order whereas the system has, in fact, been eroded from within.

The next step is still more palpably the cause of the downfall of the feudal order. On the death of the Duke of Gaunt, Richard assumes to himself all the land, property and the revenues of the Duke of Lancaster. His uncle, the Duke of York, argues forcefully that the social order including kingship depends upon the right of succession by birth.

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Did not the one deserve to have an heir?
 Is not his heir a well-deserving son?
 Take Hereford's rights away, and take from Time
 His charters and his customary rights:
 Let not tomorrow then ensue today;
 Be not thyself; for how art thou a king
 But by fair sequence and succession? (II. i. 192-99)

The new force that enters to replace feudal loyalty becomes clear when Bolingbroke returns from his exile to assume his rights in the name of his father, John Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster. This is a popular force in contrast to the aristocratic principle of prerogative by birth which expressed disdain and contempt of the common man. The courtiers of Richard have noticed Bolingbroke wooing of favour of the commonality at the time of his banishment.

Ourself, and Bushy, Bagot here, and Green,
 Observed his courtship to the common people.(I. iv. 23-24)

The future Henry IV uses his force as an instrument of public policy and the remnants of the feudal order disappear before this new force which enters into the body politics of England. At the end of the play the Duke of York describes the contrast between the welcome of Bolingbroke and the rejection of Richard.

Whilst all tongues cried 'God save thee, Bolingbroke!'
 You would have thought the very windows spake,
 So many greedy looks of young and old
 Through casements darted their desiring eyes
 Upon his visage; and that all the walls
 With painted imagery had said at once
 'Jesu preserve thee! Welcome, Balingbroke!' (V. ii. 11-17)

Richard, on the other hand, draws contempt and scorn of the common people who throw dust on his head. Thus the transformation is complete and Bolingbroke becomes the king.

Yet the deposition and murder of the rightful anointed King cannot be seen by the Elizabethans for anything but a tragedy. The end of Richard II is therefore, tragic and Henry IV's auspices is still tentative and on probation. This is Shakespear's mature understanding of his society.

The two parts of *Henry Fourth*, though very distinct in quality, carry forward the theme adumbrated in *Richard the Second*. At the end

of the earlier play *Carlisle* had prophesized conflict and civil war if Bolingbroke was crowned as the king.

And, if you crown him, let me prophesy
The blood of English shall manure the ground,(IV. i. 127-28)

As the first part of *Henry IV* opens, the prophecy has come true. The rebels who were previously his collaborators raised the standard of revolt and the king is weary and desirous of the return of peace to his strife torn land where native blood will not be shed in the civil wars.

No more the thirsty entrance of this soil
Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood. (I. i. 5-6)

The main contest in this play is between Henry Percy nicknamed Hotspur and Prince Hal (Harry of Monmouth), the future king Henry the Fifth. However, before this contest comes to a head, Shakespeare has shown us the condition of England, the development of the common people through the sheriff and the citizens of London and the degeneration and degradation of the knightly order during the later Middle Ages.

For this purpose Shakespeare hit upon the device of introducing a comic sub plot in which Falstaff reigns as the unrestrained prince of disorder. This device was available to Shakespeare from the example of Morality plays from which the Elizabethan drama has developed. It appears that the critics have not so far fully realized the debt of Shakespearean drama to the morality tradition. Briefly speaking, a morality structure used psychomachia as a device of plot and the career of the protagonist is divided into serious and comic episodes. The most important comic figure is Vice who represents the forces of evil and comic contrast to the serious doings of the hero. This will explain what is usually called the transformation of prince Hal from a disorderly youth to a heroic knight. In fact there is "no transformation and prince Hal is undergoing an apprenticeship to prepare himself for the duty which is cast on him as popularly anointed king" (Traversy,58).

Hotspur, on the other hand, is a mirror of gallantry in the chivalrous sense of the upholder of old medieval code of honour. That is why when Henry the Fourth hears about the victories of Hotspur, he comments.

There thou makest me sad and makest me sin.
In envy that my Lord Northumberland

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Should be the father to so blest a son,
A son who is the theme of honor's tongue;
Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant;
Who is sweet Fortune's minion and her pride:
Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,
See riot and dishonour stain the brow
Of my young Harry. (I. i. 77-85)

Hotspur is the votary of the code of honour and he says:

Send danger from the east unto the west,
So honour cross it from the north to south,
And let them grapple. (I iii 193-95)

The 'honour' by which Hotspur swears has been tainted by the rebellion of Bolingbroke against Richard. Hence this tainted honour is not an adequate symbol of the value in the new age that has dawned with the accession of Henry the Fourth. Falstaff who is a knight (compare the knight in Chaucer) throws comic light on the cult of honour. The robbery of the king's treasure at Gadshill is a parody of the heroic values that Hotspur stands for. Shakespeare further uses this episode to mock at the heroic figure which Falstaff enacts in this robbery. Falstaff's exaggeration of his heroic exploit is a comment on the war heroes as depicted in the heroic drama. In Falstaff's fictitious narration of the incident, the two opponents whom Falstaff fought against soon become thirteen and Falstaff would have gone on increasing their number still further if prince Hal had not revealed that he had single handedly disarmed all four of them, while Falstaff had turned pale and bellowed like a bull. Falstaff, however, is not without resources even after the exposure of his cowardice and takes recourse to his assumed sense of patriotism. By saying that his instinct had told him that his adversary was the royal prince and he could not fight against him.

The prince has assumed this role of a follower of Falstaff to learn the ways and manners of the people of England. So he reveals in his famous speech that when the time comes he will take off his veil of dissolution and become a true prince. However Falstaff still has the last word when Hotspur is killed by Prince Hal in the battle of Shrewsbury. Falstaff speaks his final word on honour.

Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honour set-to a leg? No. or an arm? No. Or take away the

grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is that word 'honour'? What is that 'honour'? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No Doth he hear it? No. [...] Therefore I'll none of it.(V. i. 130-39)

We, thus, see that Shakespeare's historical sense is very similar to the modern concept of history as a process of constant change and evolution. This is, to say the least, surprising even in the present age but is no less than a miracle in the age in which Shakespeare lived.

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Political Wisdom in Shakespeare

*Umed Singh**

Shakespeare is one of the prolific writers of the modern age who represents his epoch most emphatically. His writings are full of wisdom and the fact has been duly acknowledged by eminent critics and writers like Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Hazlitt, S.T Coleridge and Matthew Arnold. Shakespeare's plays—tragedies, comedies and history plays—are full of earthly and ethereal wisdom. The words of wisdom do not necessarily come from the protagonists but his clowns, villains and fools too speak the language of wisdom. How can we overlook or underestimate the wise and witty speeches and dialogues of the Fool in *King Lear*; Falstaff in *Henry IV*; Iago in *Othello*; Caliban in *The Tempest* and Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*? The present paper is an attempt to underline the political wisdom in Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Henry Iv Part-1*.

The Tempest is a dramatization of Shakespeare's political ideas about the state and the king. Most of the characters in the play speak and think in political terms and they are aware of the politics which govern their life. They hanker after power which is inextricably linked with politics. If Ariel plays the role of the agent of his government, Caliban represents all the subjects. Prospero is the king and the island is a model of commonwealth. Similarly *Henry iv part1* is also very rich in political content which brings into sharp focus the politics of the Shakespearean times vis-a- vis the present.

The Tempest is the most fascinating play of Shakespeare. The play centres around Prospero, who suffered cruelty in the hands of his own brother and lost his crown to his treacherous brother, Antonio who had conspired with other key official of the state and also with Alonso, the king of Naples to usurp the throne of Milan. The king and his infant daughter Miranda were put on a boat which was left to the mercy of the waves and winds. That he and his child Miranda survive the tumultuous sea is a miracle. Prospero learns from experience and masters the art of magic through which he commands many spirits of air, water, earth and fire.

Like other plays of Shakespeare, this play is also full of wit, wisdom and rich in political content. Prospero, the former king of

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Milan, could not manage the affairs of his kingdom because he lacked political wisdom and handed over the responsibility of governing the country to his brother, Antonio. The result was that the evil overtook the mind of Antonio and he usurped the throne which legitimately belonged to Prospero.

The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies. Thy false uncle—(I.ii.73-75)

Shakespeare seems to suggest that a king should be a man of worldly wisdom and should be well-versed in the art of governance. He should not neglect his responsibilities towards his subjects and state. The fact that power corrupts must always be borne in mind. Prospero learns from his past failings and follies, and soon after landing on the island, he starts mastering the island, which once belonged to Sycorax, the mother of Caliban. In an attempt to master the island and its sole inhabitant, he shows all the qualities of a colonial master. He understands the fact that slave is necessary for the existence of a master.

Miranda: I do not love to look on.
Pros: But, as'tis,
We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
That profit us. (I. ii.310-314)

Caliban rejects the colonial design of Prospero and complains :
This island's mine , by Sycorax my mother
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,
Thou stok'st me, and made much of me;(I.ii.335-334)

The ugly face of the master –slave relationship gets repeated in act IV scene 1 where Stephano, the newly acquired master, threatens to drive Caliban out:

Ste: Monster, lay-to your fingers: help to bear this away
Where my hogshead of wine is, or I'll turn you out
Of my kingdom: go to , carry this.(iv. i .250-253)

Prospero controls not only Caliban, a poisonous slave, but also Ariel, who is the spirit of the air and who possesses supernatural powers. He forces both of them into obedience and utilizes their strength and talent for furthering his colonial design. As a colonial master Prospero colonises the island and inflicts torments of all kinds on Caliban, the

sole native. Prospero teaches him human language only to induce servility in Caliban. Initially Caliban is ignorant of the motives of his master and takes Prospero to the various places on the island:

Then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren places and fertile
Cursed be I that did so (I.ii.335-339)

But the master uses all methods to subjugate his subject. He uses both coercion and consent, to invoke Antonio Gramsci concept of 'hegemony'. Caliban is tamed and abused and exploited by the colonial master. He learns the language of his master and feels entrapped in the colonial relationship. Now it was impossible for Caliban to avoid the consequence of this problematic relationship. Caliban desires freedom and shows his hatred for the master:

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prospero fall and make him
By inch-meal a disease.(II.ii.1-3)

Caliban was happy when he was ignorant of the dynamics of master-slave relationship. But now he feels humiliated , debased and degenerated. Note his despair in the following speech:

Caliban: You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

Prospero has learnt from experience the wisdom of the world and mans this island like a monarch. He plans things and acts accordingly. He now realizes that Miranda must get her share of happiness which was denied to her since her childhood days. When he was King of Milan, he neglected his royal responsibilities and he was ousted from the state by his treacherous brother. A king who does not bother about his subjects and the state will meet the same fate. It was not entirely Antonio's fault. Now is the time to make amends and to take revenge upon those who forced the father and daughter to leave the kingdom. Prospero orders Ariel to cause storm in the sea so that his enemies on board reach this island ruled by him. Through Ariel, Prospero brings all the passengers on the shore and gets them scattered in groups on the island. The son Ferdinand gets separated from his Father, Alonso, the king of Naples. Ariel lures Ferdinand towards Prospero's cell. Through magic he effects a meeting between Miranda and Ferdinand.

They both fall in love with each other. Prospero tests the character and commitment of Ferdinand and finally he succeeds in getting the lovers united. He takes revenge on his enemies not by killing them but by making them feel guilty about their past misdeeds and villainy. After the marriage of daughter to Ferdinand he grants freedom to Ariel; abjures the magic and breaks the magic wand. The epilogue of the play also reiterates the idea of freedom and forgiveness. In politics there are no permanent friends and no permanent foes. Prospero, the forgiver seeks forgiveness in order to bring home the wisdom “that no life is ever lived which does not need to receive as well as to render forgiveness.”⁴

The history plays of Shakespeare are full of political wisdom and it is evident from the key issues which he explores in his plays. Some of the common issues are—his attitude towards kings and commoners, usurpation of throne, the problem of succession, the civil war, rebellion, the warfare and the changing historical and political situations. Henry IV deals with all these issues and Shakespeare dramatizes history in such a way that we draw conclusions which often defy the very premise on which the whole action of the play rests.

Shakespeare understands the importance of a strong central power for the growth of a healthy human society. That is why he brings in the problem of succession in his plays. This play dramatizes the deposition and murder of Richards II and usurpation of the English Throne by Henry Bolingbroke. Henry becomes the king but the peace evades both the king and the kingdom. There is unrest in the society and there are voices of dissent from various quarters. To quote Aleksandr A. Smirnov: “To Shakespeare, the highest authority was that of absolute monarchy, but his conception of this was not so much the authority of divine right as the authority of responsibility. The monarch justifies his rank and existence only when he expresses the collective will of the people and realizes their collective will.”⁵

Hotspur: the king is kind, and well we know the king

Know at what time to promise and, when to pay:

My father and my uncle and myself

Did give him that same royalty he wears:

And when he was not six and twenty strong,(IV. iii 60-64)

Shakespeare sides with none. He subjects them all to severe criticism, be they the lords or the king. When King Henry deposed

Richard II and captured the throne by force, he realized that his claim to throne depended more on his popular acceptance by the people and not by the idea of divine rights of the king. As an artist Shakespeare portrayed life as he saw it. And he saw that there was something which resisted monarchy i.e. the divine rights of a king. However he was not taking sides with any party. He neither glorifies the king nor the nobles who rise in revolt against the monarch. He exposes the cruelty, cunningness, inhumanity and treachery of both the king and the noble men. The nobles are equally bad; they are faithful neither to the king nor to themselves. It appears that the world envisioned in the play is full of corruption where oaths of allegiance are taken only to be broken. But as a true humanist Shakespeare always stresses the ‘innate goodness’ of man and explores every the possibility of redemption in his characters.

Like other history plays *Henry IV* does not leave any doubt as to where Shakespeare’s sympathies lay. The nobles and lords depicted in this play — the Percys, Glendowers, Mortimers—are arrogant and troublemakers. They are always hatching conspiracies to destabilize or dethrone the ruler of the state. They get united against the king and declare open rebellion. Hotspur reminds the king’s accession to the British throne with the help of Hotspur’s father. He accuses the present king of being unkind and ungrateful to those who had helped the king to occupy the seat of power. The politics of power begins again and now the rebels plan to overthrow Henry. The rebel group is formed by the hot-headed Henry Percy or Hotspur, the earl of Northumberland, Thomas Percy. Earl of Worcester, Lady Percy, Edmund Mortimer, Owen Glendower, the Earl of Douglas etc. This development unnerves the King and he feels very upset about the fact that his son Henry is dissipating his youth in the vulgar company of drunkards, gamblers and lechers. He takes little interest in the affairs of the state. The King does not appreciate the way Prince mixes up with the common people. He teaches him the lesson that too much familiarity with people only breeds contempt. The king must maintain some respectable distance from those whom he rules.

By being seldom seen, I could not stir

But like a comet I was wondered at;

That men would tell their children “this is he”

…… Thus did I keep my person fresh and new (III.ii.47-50)

The king rebukes him for his indecent and unbecoming conduct and tries to stir his conscience by appreciating the fighting spirit and character of his rival, Hotspur. The advice works wonder and Prince Henry takes a vow to redeem himself.

The King and the Prince are prepared for war against the rebellious group but they make an effort to resolve the conflict through dialogue, discussion and conference. The Prince understands the truth that war kills people and it brings misfortune to the state. The king wins the battle but as guardian of the state he tried to avert the war with the rebels. Prince:

And I will, to save the blood on either side,
Try fortune with him in a single fight
(V.I. 99-100)

Shakespeare seems to disapprove the idea of false glory associated with war. The idea echoes in his poem "The World is a Stage" where the glory earned by the soldier has been compared with 'bubble reputation'. In other words, war can be avoided so the destruction and death resulting from war can also be avoided.

Thus the play shows the dynamics of power by enacting the drama of usurpation in the history of England. If one sets the precedent, the other will follow the suit. After Bolingroke has seized power by way rebellion, the feudal lords get a clue as to how to attain power. They demand to be accommodated in the sphere of power. The king tries to placate them and offers terms for reconciliation with the rebellious lords but the lords have something else in their mind. By now they have come to understand the political arithmetic and believe that If Henry can succeed in overthrowing Richards II, they too can take the same route. They decide to defeat and destabilize the king but, like the political partners of a modern Coalition Govt., they fail to overcome their personal political ambitions and their offensive against the king is not as severe as it ought to be. The lack of cohesion among the nobles led to the death of Hotspur. This continues to happen even today and in a Parliamentary form of Govt. in which various political parties with different political ideologies come together to unsettle the existing power structure only to grab the power. And after the defeat of their common enemy, they fight among themselves.

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Politics of Power in Shakespeare's *King John*

Deepti Sharma*

20

King John was first printed in the 1623 Folio, where it was placed at the head of the history plays. It is considered to be one of Shakespeare's great historical tragedy expressing historical and political ideas. Shakespeare's history plays are primarily concerned with the public life of his nation, the terrible hundred years of civil strife and wars against the French that haunted the imagination of Elizabethan England and that earlier time of crisis in the reign of King John. His plays express the deepest and the most widespread feelings of his countrymen. To them political matters were not of merely theoretical concern; they dreaded the return of a chaos that they knew would involve them and their families in untold suffering.

The play *King John* has an important role in the political, religious, historiographic mindset of the English Renaissance and Reformation. Shakespeare makes a new discovery that public and private morality do not always march together. As is typical of his English history plays, the plot of Shakespeare's *King John* is driven by a violent struggle for political power. It features conspiracy, treason, assassination, moral corruption, poisoning, civil war and foreign conquest. In short, his subject matter in the play is political crisis, a crisis brought on by confusion - to put it politely - over who should be the king of England.

Arthur is the legitimate or legal king of England. But he lives powerless on the continent, and England is ruled by the illegitimate King John, who has no intention of abandoning the throne. Legitimacy doesn't seem to matter much. Or, perhaps more accurately, legitimacy is both acknowledged and ignored—hence the political crisis is created. Because Shakespeare is often thought to be an orthodox Elizabethan conservative, sometimes even a propagandist for hereditary monarchy, so it is expected from him to offer in *King John* a vigorous defense of political custom, that is, a defense of Arthur's legitimate hereditary claim to the throne against the usurping King John.

Arthur is a pawn of his mother, who wants to be the Queen, of the French and their Austrian allies, who want to topple John and control and dismantle the Angevin Empire, and of the Pope, who also has designs on England. Thus Shakespeare makes two things clear at

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the outset of *King John* - Arthur is both the legitimate king of England and a grave threat to its autonomy.

The action of the play centers on the reign of King John and the contested crown which he held. The issue is, who is the rightful king - John, who officially holds the crown or his nephew Arthur. John was the younger brother of King Richard I who died without children and the son of Henry and Eleanor while Arthur is the son of Geoffrey, elder brother of King Richard the first. Arthur and his mother Constance are in France, trying to persuade King Philip, to back the claim that Arthur is the rightful king and that John to be deposed. They enter into a power struggle aligning themselves to the French king. Therefore an ambassador Chatillon is sent to King John at the very outset of the play where King John is denoted as the "borrowed majesty" (*King John*, 63) and the embassy claims the right of Arthur. As the French prepare to storm the town, John and his army shows up to challenge the French. King John says:

war for war and blood for blood,
controlment for control.

So answers France. (*King John*, 64)

While on the other hand, King Philip of France, willing to have a war against the King says:

To rebuke the usurpation
of thy unnatural uncle, English John. (*King John*, 75)

This is all about the politics of power. In a hilarious development, the two sides appeal to the citizens to hear the case and decide who the rightful king is and whom they should open the gates to. However, the townspeople in a rather clever dodge, decide that they just can't decide and the two armies with their powers can give their judgment. The complexities of war time politics are revealed when the town refuses to admit either the king of England or the king of France as its rightful ruler until the two kings have fought out the question - whereupon the kings decide to agree on a truce, just long enough to wipe the town out together, then go back fighting one another.

Obviously this could work in the interest of the town since the two armies would decimate each other and they might end up safe in the bargain. The folks support a radical view of 'might makes right'. Finally, a citizen proposes:

Lady Blanche is niece to England...

Is the young Dauphin every way complete...
 To these two princes if you marry them.
 This union shall do more than battery can
 To our fast closed gates...
 The mouths of passage shall we fling wide open
 And give you entrance. (King John, 92)

After offering such bait the citizen proves that he can be as seemingly intransigent as the kings who stand below: “without this match / the sea enraged is not half so deaf” (King John, 93). All agree to this and King John assures the dowry to be given in terms of land. All this is done to stay in tune and remain as king not opposed by anyone. He also proposes Arthur as the Duke of Brittain and Earl of Richmond “and this rich fare town / we make him Lord of “. (King John, 97)

For all this politics around, Bastard comments:
 Mad world, mad kings, mad composition.
 John to stop Arthur title in the whole
 Hath willingly departed with a part
 And France whose amour conscience buckled on,
 That broker that still breaks the pate of faith,
 that smooth-faced gentleman ,
 Tickling commodities
 Commodities the bias of the world,
 the world, who of itself is peised well. (King John, 98)

To satisfy the French, King John surrenders the some provinces. John’s overgenerous dowry for Blanche is a costly necessity typical of this world, but it doesn’t seem to bother John much as it does King Philips for accepting that bribe and abandoning Arthur’s claim, for King Philip has personally betrayed Constance. Although only a few characters- the citizen and Pandulph are almost wholly constituted by public values, most seem to possess an individual consciousness that flickers into life at moments that could change the course of history.

King John’s defiance of the Pope’s authority over a scared king is of political relevance.

The legate of the Pope, Pandulph arrives and objects to John’s denial of the Church’s appointee. King John considering himself to be the ‘supreme head’ in his lands says that he will rule ‘without interference’.

No Italian priest
 Shall tithe or toll in our dominions

Where we do reign, we will alone uphold
 Without the assistance of a mortal hand
 So tell the Pope, all reverence set apart
 To him and his usurped authority. (King John, 106)

Knowing that John will either have Arthur killed or abdicate the throne and become vulnerable to Rome, Pandulph encourages King Philip to fight for Arthur’s claim. Under pressure John decides to have Arthur killed by his loyal subject Hubert who fails to do so but being unaware of this fact, King John turns on Hubert when he thinks the murder will bring evil to him. He says:

Why unrest thouso oft young Arthur’s death?
 Thy hand hath murdered him. I had a mighty cause
 To wish him dead, but thou hadst none to kill him.
 (King John, 139)

But on the other hand Arthur in prison tries to escape and falls onto rocks and dies for which John is blamed. Finally, King John is poisoned by a monk and dies and his son Henry is crowned as the king after him. Till the very end of his life, King John plays politics just to remain in power. It is a curious play as it has no obvious villain or hero, though King John himself shares some of the qualities of both. England’s saviour in the play is not a saint, nor even a particular good man; but he is a man able to adapt himself to what his experience has shown him to be the necessities of political life. The anti-catholic nationalist does not exactly turn into a murderer, for Shakespeare allows King John to be only a murderer by intention and once Arthur is dead, John becomes a semi-legitimate king, worthy of support from patriotic citizens. As Hibbard suggests, “John is the first of Shakespeare’s tragic criminals, the man of power who gives way to temptation that the successful exercise of power brings with it”. (King John, 26) Jonh Foster emphasised that above all “in every tragedy, there is Mind at work, without which wealth of material is nothing”. (King John, 29)

The foundation of King John is political, for it deals with the question of law and power. The government rests upon power and law, cemented by loyalty, i.e. it requires the ability to rule effectively within a certain consensus of the king, the courts and the people. King John is not a particularly attractive or admirable figure. His “turbulence and grandeur of the passions...inconstancy of temper...mixture of good and ill...series of misfortunes” are seen as being the elements that

“might make him very fit for a hero in a just composition”.
(Shakespeare’s *History Plays*, 127)

From beginning to end, John is nothing more than a selfish politician who has power and will do anything including invading France and assassinating Arthur to keep it. Because of Arthur’s friends and John’s character, a play which frames itself in terms of a legitimacy dispute quickly becomes a blow by blow account of the struggle for power between talented, ambitious, and unscrupulous politicians, ultimately between a murderer king and an atheist Cardinal. The conflict between political tradition and national sovereignty with which the play opens gives way almost immediately to the theme of force and fraud. The high rhetoric of both kings only masked low self-interest: John wanted to keep his throne, Phillip wanted land. In having John give away so much more than the historical King John did, Shakespeare probably intended to emphasize the lengths to which John would go to preserve his personal power (as opposed to England’s national integrity). Shakespeare implies in *King John* that “knowledge is never complete in a fallen world and the values are subtly modified by the way one senses the ambient air” (The Lost Garden, 89)

In light of the treachery, violence, and massive bloodshed that will follow as soon as Pandulf arrives on the scene, the peaceful compromise these unprincipled deal-makers have brought about looks like sound politics. This is not to say that Shakespeare flatly endorses a view of politics that only has room for self-interested realists, or that he rejects the Bastard’s plea for a more principled approach. In fact, the same character who here criticizes John and Phillip will later save England and, perhaps more importantly, may save *us*, from the depressing view that politics is little more than a race to the moral bottom. But there are worse alternatives than the ‘moderate realism’ these two kings represent. John and Phillip are selfish, but not without some moral sense. John’s decision to kill Arthur may be morally repugnant, but it does make political sense, both as a means to preserve his kingship and as a means to save England from a successful conquest.

John’s success turns to despair at the end, like that of Macbeth whose ambitions are gradually displaced by fears and by compulsive and self-defeating attempts to shore up his diminishing power. Like Macbeth, when he stops listening to his wife, John seems to lack insight, particularly after the death of his mother. Montaigne puts it as: there is nothing that

throws us so much into dangers as unthinking eagerness to get clear of them,” for “fear sometimes arises from want of judgment as well as from want of courage” (Complete Essays of Montaigne, 85)

To conclude, Shakespeare’s corpus under grids the Englishness of British literary culture and his work is often enlisted in the service of conservative English nationalism. His representation of the history, formation and future of the British state are complex and heterogeneous. The closing speech of the play *King John* by the bastard contains several recurring features of English nationalism; a siege mentality; England backed into a corner by Europe; the myth of an expatriate culture- specifically a monarchal culture – repatriated; a defiant claim to global power; and an identity and claim of right to self-determination that transcends nations and empires:

O let us pay the time but needful woe
since it hath been beforehand with our griefs.
this England never did nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
but when it first help to wound itself
Now these her princes are come home again,
come to three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them.
Nought shall make us rue
If England to itself do rest but true. (King John, 169)

The play points to an obvious anti-catholic sentiment. *King John* can be called as the play by Shakespeare of which politics seem beyond dispute as it ends with a note of refreshed, exile-rated patriotism and newly forged national integrity; King John shows the pretensions of majesty- the monarch’s glory and greatness, his just right to govern and his moral obligation to govern well- being undercut at every turn by tickling commodity.

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Edward Albee's Married Couples: Are Marriages Made in Heaven?

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. . . there is a question floating around this particular area of the beach as to whether these marriages were made in heaven. (Finding the Sun 228)

This question not only floats in the mind of sixteen years old Fergus, a character in Albee's play *Finding the Sun*, but also comes in reader's mind while reading Albee's dramas. The coming together of man and woman makes this world worth-living because marriage is the core of each and every relation; it is the foundation of family and family-ties. But in Albee's plays a continuous battle of sexes can be noticed between each and every husband and wife. His couples are neither 'made in heaven' nor are they 'made for each-other'. This raises a question in our mind that either their marriages made in heaven or their need for the "other significant" is the foundation of this sanctimonious relation, and how the foundation of marriage laid upon 'need' rather than love has proved these matches mismatched for each-other. The continuous battles and problems in their marriages make us think that, at least, the marriages of Albee's couples are not made in heaven because these problematic marriages are turning their lives into hell. All the couples in Albee's dramas are dissatisfied with their lives and relationships because they are dissatisfied with their 'better-halves'.

Albee examines the problems and imbalances in marriages because he is strictly against the romanticism of marriage, love and life. Just like Bernard Shaw, Albee is against the over-romanticization of any idea. We know that Shaw found no use of ideal philosophies in marriage. For him it is sheer romanticism to say that romantic life is full of blessings and family is a cradle of happiness. Shaw wanted us to be real and reasonable in domestic as well as romantic ideals. Albee, just like Shaw, believes that there is no magic in marriage. This is why he sought the reality lying under these ideal myths and philosophies. According to Albee, when we connect anything with over-fanciful idea then that idea is bound to crumble, because over-expectation leads to

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shattered dreams. Albee is completely against the romantic notions which we combine with marriage. Since the time of his very first Broadway production, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Albee has been unveiling the bitter realities of marriages and has been questioning the myth of 'marriages made in heaven'. Albee pointed out in an interview,

I write about imbalances within many relationships. My goodness, if I came upon a totally balanced and content situation, where's the drama in that? What would I write about? All drama is about people not getting along with each other. All drama embraces imbalance, discontentment. It has to be or there's no dramatic experience. (197)

The present article will examine the crumbling marriage ties of various couples in Albee's plays. His most famous and frustrated couple, George and Martha, from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) is a match made in hell. They both are discontented because they are unable to come up to each other's expectations. The next couple, Nick and Honey from the same play, is unhappy because the very foundation of their marriage is laid upon a lie – a 'hysterical pregnancy,' rather than love. Tobias and Agnes from *A Delicate Balance* (1966) are equally disappointed from their marriage bond, and this tortures them so much that they have moved into separate bed-rooms. The anonymous couple – He and She – in *Counting the Ways* (1977) is counting after the twenty years of their marriage either they love each other or not. Later on we come to know that just like Tobias and Agnes, their "lovely bed" has split into 'two'. *Finding the Sun* (1983) also examines the marriage bond, and unveils that how marriage has turned into a need for Benjamin-Abigail, Denial-Cordelia and Henden-Gertrude. *Marriage Play* (1987) concentrates on Jack and Gillian's dissection of their thirty years of marriage and, this play gives us a key for a harmonious marriage. Laura Julier rightly remarks that Albee "most often focus on the tension between the Mommy and Daddy characters in his plays: the war between male and female, and the emasculation of the American male and American society by the American bitch mother" (34).

The most troubled marriage is presented in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* through George and Martha. It seems as if they are definitely made in hell. Martha and George function by humiliating and

verbally attacking one another. Throughout the play they hurt and degrade each other. Martha, the domineering wife and the bossy bitch continuously reminds her husband of his failure. George is a cipher for her. Martha makes it clear that she married George because her father – the President of the university wanted someone to “take over [. . .], when he quit” (166). But George, as says Martha, “didn’t have much . . . push . . . he wasn’t particularly . . . aggressive. In fact he was a sort of [. . .] FLOP! A great . . . big . . . fat . . . FLOP!” (167). Martha frequently mentions her great and successful father, and shows her bitterness to be paired with a mediocre associate professor. George’s inability to come up to the expectations of his wife and father-in-law proves him a ‘flop’ in their eyes. So, their marriage which was more a business deal becomes the troubled one.

George and Martha are “equal competitors” (Roudane 72). George too attacks her back by breaking a bottle in anger at the time when Martha makes fun of his autobiographical novel in front of their guests and finally they declare “Total War” (VW 183). After this declaration George too humiliates Martha and her guests. But George’s act is an outcome of a profound love because he not only wants to punish Martha for breaking their ‘tacit agreement’ but also wants to free her from the grip of illusions. This is why; George kills her illusionary ‘son’. But these ‘equal competitors’ are totally different in their temperament. Martha is a bossy and aggressive woman but George is a timid and submissive man. Even his way of showing his anger is too submissive that Martha makes fun of this. What is being depicted by this mismanaged and mismatched relationship is that equality and the involvement of both in each and every passion, either the passion of love or hatred, is required in order to have a balanced relationship.

The second troubled couple in this play is Nick and Honey – George and Martha’s guests of the violent night. The elder couple takes a cynical pleasure in destroying the harmony of their marriage. Pretending to be a friendly drinking guy, George listens to Nick’s confessions, and secrets of Nick and Honey’s marriage. Nick and Honey’s relation crumbles because the two reasons for which Nick married Honey, conflict with the beliefs about the genuine basis of marriage. Nick tells that he married Honey because of two reasons – the first one was wealth of Honey’s father, and the second one Honey’s hysterical pregnancy.

NICK. [. . .] I married her because she was pregnant.

GEORGE. (Pause) Oh? But you said you didn’t have any children . . . When I asked you, you said . . .

NICK. She wasn’t . . . really. It was a hysterical pregnancy. She blew up and then she went down. (169)

So, the foundation of this marriage too is not love but need, selfishness and lie. Later on we come to know that Honey doesn’t want any child because she is afraid of pain. She does not want any responsibility but just wants romance. This is why Nick is unable to fulfill Honey’s romantic dream. This selfishness in the marriage bond and unfulfilled expectations destroy the younger couple’s marriage just like the elder one. Thus, the unfulfilled desires and expectations prove the reasons of these frustrated and troubled marriages.

The imbalanced marriage of another couple named Tobias and Agnes can be seen in Albee’s *A Delicate Balance*. The reason of this couple’s wasted marriage is a bit different from the first two couples i.e., Tobias’s self imposed exile from commitment and Agnes’s futile efforts to be the lone delicate balancer. Tobias has made a number of passive choices – literal withdrawal during sex, and, eventually, withdrawal into another room leaving Agnes bitter and cold. Matthew C. Roudane points out that this play “imitates the subtle shifts in human relationships, shifts from engagement to habit, from commitment to estrangement, from love to indifference” (99). The reason of this indifference or Tobias’s moving to another room is death of their son, Teddy. After Teddy’s death Tobias felt himself incapable of having another child and left Agnes all alone in their room, shouting and crying for her part of love: “Don’t leave me then, like that. Not again, Tobias. Please? I can take care of it: we won’t have another child, but please don’t . . . leave me like that. Such . . . silent . . . sad, disgusted . . . love” (DB 101). But Tobias moves to separate room because he does not want “another child, another loss” (101).

Arrival of their best friends, Harry and Edna, and their daughter Julia force Tobias back into his bedroom with Agnes; but there is no talk, no sex. Twenty years’ separation has turned husband and wife in to “strangers”, despite the fact that they are living under the same roof.

AGNES. There was a stranger in my room last night.

TOBIAS. Who?

AGNES. You. [. . .] What a shame, what sadness – you were a stranger, and I stayed awake. (92)

This clarifies the futility of their marriage as the presence of the ‘other significant’ is not soothing but troubling. So, even though this couple is not in a “total war” situation and has evolved a workable relationship, but this has left them estranged from each other.

Counting the Ways: A Vaudeville also counts the ways of love in the twenty years’ marriage of He and She. The title reminds us of Elizabeth Browning’s sonnet XLII in which she counts the ways of love. In the same way, in this play, married couple is counting the ways of their twenty years’ marriage. The play opens with both He and She reading, and suddenly She puts her magazine down and asks him “Do you love me?” but in spite of giving an answer He asks “Why do you ask?” and She replies “Well: because I want to know” (CW 523). This question after the twenty years of marriage is a direct satire and parody of marriage as an institution, and counts the loss of meaning as well as love in the couple’s life. She Keeps repeating the question with more emphasis on the word ‘love’ but despite of getting an answer, the couple indulges in other questions – death of love, sexual impotence with increasing age and similarity as well as difference between love and sex. This elderly couple does not understand that with the passage of time people need to change their ways of love. The same romance and love can never be there after twenty years. So, one should be ready to accept the ever changing reality of his/her relationship.

Other couples who are sailing in the same boat of frustrated marriage can be seen in *Finding the Sun*. This play brings together three married couples at a New England beach on a bright August day, and examines their marriage-ties as well as their illicit relations. Mel Gussow calls this play “A roundelay about couples decoupling on a beach, it has a melancholic air. It is one of his few plays with overtly gay characters” (329). The problematic ties in this play are of Daniel and Cordelia’s, and Benjamin and Abigail’s. The basic reason of their journey from “pleasure into pain” is “Benjamin and Daniel were lovers” (FS 209), they were involved in a homosexual relationship with each other before their marriage. Later on Daniel married Cordelia only because of his father and society, and Benjamin married Abigail because after Daniel’s marriage he was lonely so, he decided to find a wife to get rid from loneliness and desperation. So, the very foundation of

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these marriages is not ‘love’ but ‘need’ and ‘social norms’, and this is why these ties crumble. Even after a long gap when Benjamin and Daniel confront each other their craving for each other can be noticed:

BENJAMIN (Shrugs; smile). I love you.

DANIEL (Nods; removes his hand). I love you, and I miss you. (201)

The dialogue between the two former lovers; makes it clear that they are unable to forget their former love and cannot cope up with their new relations.

Benjamin’s wife Abigail is completely dissatisfied with her marriage because there is no physical expression of love and affection, even holding. Abigail does not trust her husband and never let him go out of her sight. The frustration of Abigail can be seen in her monologue where she says, “I’m leaving you, Benjamin. No, I’ll never give you a divorce, you . . . you . . .; you’re making our lives shambles, Benjamin; we could have been so happy together” (246). After this monologue Abigail tries to drown herself but is saved by some other people. Even after this incident, Benjamin is unable to go to his wife, who has just been saved from drowning because he does not know what to say to her.

The second couple is a bit rationale than the first one. They are also confronting the same crisis, but Cordelia’s clear sense of the limitations of her marriage has saved her from being as dissatisfied as Abigail is. She knows the fact that “Daniel is more interested in our friendship than our marriage (226). She knows that Daniel has male lovers but she is satisfied of being his “only woman”. Perhaps this trio of Daniel-Cordelia-Benjamin is a solution to their desire of being connected, yet however rationale is the base of their marriage, they both are also frustrated. Cordelia knows that Daniel loves both Benjamin and her, but this will not work for whole life. Either one day she will be frustrated with this trio or Daniel will be fed up with this. John M. Clum rightly remarks on the hollowness of the marriage bond of these couples:

The marriages lead to varying degree of unhappiness for all four members of this sad marital network. Benjamin is falling apart emotionally without Daniel and within an unsatisfying marriage. His wife, Abigail, tries to drown herself Danile loves Cordelia and Benjamin. Daniel has sex with Cordelia, Benjamin, and

other men. What does this marriage mean in any traditional sense? (71-72)

The third couple – Henden and Gertrude, who are seventy and sixty simultaneously, though do not have any problem in their marriage, yet their knot of marriage is also tied far from the claim of love, just for need. For this oldest couple, it is a remarriage for companionship. Henden is Gertrude's third husband, and Henden married Gertrude after his wife's death. He says, "And I married Gertrude – though I like her very much – I suppose to be married, as much as anything: a continuity (FS 207). Thus, marriage for this eldest couple is a custom, a "continuity". It seems as if for this couple marriage is a medium to escape from isolation and from the thought of death. Not even a single couple, among these three couples, seems to be made in Heaven.

Marriage Play is a realistic portrait of marriage. The couple's (Jack and Gillian) relationship is signature Albee. This highly literate, articulate and intuitive couple is immensely fed up with each other and with their "neither boring nor exciting" (MP 257) relationship. Jack and Gillian, who sound like Jack and Jill, represent any usual husband-wife who if dissect thirty years of their marriage, will come to the conclusion like Jerry of *The Zoo Story* that what is gained is loss. This grim idea of inevitable loss of love, of innocence and of expectation, is the crux of Albee's dramas because our rat-race for happiness and perfect relationship leads us to unhappiness and dissatisfaction because nothing and nobody is perfect in this world. This deep but ironical meditation of life is the core of Albee's married couples' relation. So, in a way, all these crumbling relationships represent the reminiscent of Jaques in *As You Like It* because as he believes one loses not only teeth, hair, eyes but 'everything' so is believed by Albee. This is why when Jack dissects thirty years of marriage he realizes futility crippling in their marriage. He says: "I become aware of awareness. I may have never known before, of clarity, of . . . revelation, I suppose. [. . .] for it is so painful, and so sweet, and so . . . emptying" (276-77). This awareness leads him to declare that he is leaving Gillian. Jack says he is leaving her because for him "life is about to change" (255) and because "a bell went off" (259). Gillian makes no complaint because she is absorbed in reading a book which she calls "*A Book of days; my book; The Book of days*", she further explains, "It is a book I am writing. It is called *The Book of Days* [. . .] it's not fiction [. . .] not a "dear diary". It's a

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record, it's a clinical record. [. . .] of our making love." (262). So, we come to know that the awareness which Jack has attained after thirty years of their marriage, that awareness was attained by Gillian since the very beginning of their marriage through this documentation which she wrote about their marriage and noted down nearly three thousand events in the thirty years of marriage. She finally asserts, "I have missed you for years, and so why not now, you mean?" (285) and further she says, "So, go on; leave me; I'll survive it. You're not big enough for the gesture. You're nothing" (286).

Jack and Gillian prove to be the most aware couple of Albee. This couple becomes the mouthpiece of Albee and gives us the message – to face the reality and to fulfill the responsibilities of marriage. This couple gives us the crux of all the problems in marriage:

JACK. You; me; and the people we pretend to be – were pretending to be. Crowded in the little car, jockeying and all.

GILLIAN. I think we probably should have married them – the two we were pretending to be. (294)

They make it clear that during the courtship boy and girl pretend to be what they are not, and this leads the other one to over expectations as well as to an over-romantic plane. But when they are tied in marriage knot suddenly a number of responsibilities start hovering around them or they start taking each other casually, and the couple is unable to cope up with this totally different situation which leads them to a disturbed and crumbled marriage. Gillian, like a philosopher, makes it clear that over-expectation in life as well as in relationship leads to frustration. She says, "trick is to want what you can get" (300). So, this idea of being happy with "what you can get" is the crux for a harmonious marriage and a good relationship.

Moving ahead, this couple discloses the basic reason of all the frustrations in marriage and gives us the second solution for happy married life. Gillian says, "Passion in a marriage never dies; it changes" (302) and when this passion for the other counterpart fades then other passions rush in – passion of loss, of indifference, of hatred and finally "passion of nothing" (302). At the moment passion of nothing creeps in a marriage there is nothing left and marriage tie crumbles. So, one should not let passion die and never let all these frustrations come in his/her marriage bond.

The third and the final message given to us is – couples should not “compensate” one another but they should “complement” each other. Gillian says, “Marriage does not make two people one, it makes two people two – a good marriage, a useful marriage makes individuals! That when two people choose to be together though they’re strong enough to be alone, then you have a good marriage” (304). The idea Albee is giving here is, when we tie a bond only because of necessity then after some time that marriage crumbles. So, the foundation should be laid up on love and emotions, because marriage is not an act of ‘compensation’ but it is a commitment in which couple compliments each other. This couple is able to understand all the problems and is able to face these problems this is why unlike other Albee’s couples they are able to make a contact in the end. The play ends when both of them are sitting together silently, holding each other’s hands. This play, though is a bit complex, yet clears the clouds hovering upon all the early discussed marriages. Albee confessed that he likes this play because this play does not deal with the ‘Death of Marriage’ but with ‘Illness of Marriage’ and gives us the solutions to get rid from the problems of a sick marriage.

In a nutshell, Albee’s couples – from the totally troubled one, George and Martha, to a bit aware, Jack and Gillian – suffer various degrees of frustration, trouble, dissonance and disequilibrium in their marriage ties. Because these couples, under the myths of ‘made in heaven’ and ‘made for each other’, use marriage knot as a medium to retreat from the bitter realities into a world of comfort. But instead of reducing tension and resolving discrepancies this retreat intensifies their existing frustration by further creating a mismanaged and troubled marriage. Albee knows that man by nature tends to invent such fictions but this idealization makes us unable to face reality. So, Albee wants to shun all these idealized myths and philosophies in order to make his characters as well as audience strong enough to cope up with the reality which will lead to a harmonious marriage as well as balanced life.

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Shashi Deshpande as an Existentialist

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Existentialism is a philosophical outlook with its roots in German romanticism. It was a protest in the name of individuality against the 'rationality' of 18th century Enlightenment; more directly, it derives from, or at least recognizes as forerunners, the Danish theologians Soren Kierkegaard, and the German moralist Friedrich Nietzsche. Neither of them was a systematic philosopher, but together they brought about existentialism into being. Kierkegaard, for example thought that in the earlier philosophy, in Hegelian philosophy the individual is submerged in the mass. He urged the individual to *become* a Christian. It shocked many born in Christian family, or for that matter, a born Hindu or as a Muslim. But Kierkegaard meant was that one has to become religious by passion and earnestness.

Nietzsche also felt that religion in its organized form tames individuals and reduces them to something less than human –without courage and in fact without the dionysiac. Those who followed these two philosophers Jaspers, Marcel, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus as also Marleau-Ponty, carried the philosophy of existentialism forward. These philosophers could be divided into those who were theistic and those who were atheistic. In regard to our reading of Shashi Deshpande, there is a sense in studying her in relations to atheistic terms, for her world is bereft of the supernatural. For her, as for Sartre, there are no noumena. That is why her world is phenomenal.

In fact Shashi Deshpande is one of the foremost Indian novelists, known for writing in the strain of existentialism. However, while critics find this strain in her novels, beginning with *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, they take a general view of existentialism in her female protagonists. The present paper addresses itself to one of her much discussed female protagonist Jaya in *That Long Silence* from the point of view of phenomenological existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre. What Sartre means by phenomenological analysis of being in his *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology* (1956) is that though being-in-itself is in some manner or the other is complete in itself, as for example Jaya feels done in her marital life, but she has right from the opening of

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the novel a premonition that though in the contingent world something catastrophic often happens, it has not happened in her life as yet. It means that she opens herself up for-itself, i.e. which has to be what it is or to put it differently "which is what it is not and which is not what it is."¹ Each individual is cursed with freedom and must make his or her own way in the world, although many people resort to devices to hide this from themselves. Life is without ultimate meaning, but we are forced to make choices all the time.

And one day, the catastrophe did take place in her life too. Her husband was involved in a scam in the office and was advised to become unavailable. So the couple shifted to their Dadar flat, breaking all connections to the rest of the world. When one day, Mohan, Jaya's husband, left for an enclosed destination, Jaya suddenly felt free. This freedom she longed for but could not dare to grab it for the simple reason that she was sucked into her marital life, which entailed her bondages in bringing up the family of two children, an ideal family at that, consuming her all energy to keep the pose of an ideal wife. She thought she chose Mohan but to her surprise, it was he, who chose her. Her whole life has been a veritable drudgery, cleaning, washing and in short keeping it sparkling. In her own description, her married life is: A pair of bullocks yoked together... a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality? A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children. A family somewhat preserved for posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this: we were two persons. A man and a woman.²

Nevertheless she could not, for all her care, fill up the hole in her heart, which kept gapping wide the more she tried to fill it up. In Sartre, as in Shashi Deshpande, this is the basic irony. In Sartrean language, the for-itself is a tiny nihilation which has its origin in the heart of being and this nihilation is sufficient to cause a total upheaval to the stability of the in-itself. This upheaval is the world. Jaya's world turned upside down. But this brought out her freedom. When earlier she wrote, her husband always introduced her to others as a small-time writer, writing for children's magazines. After his exit, she took her pen and wrote after that long silence, giving all that happened from the beginning of her life to this point. She thought as she wrote her story, that she could be free from that moment onwards. The novel thus is a tale of interrogating the connection between the being which considers

itself full, but in fact is empty of substance, as every process of foundation of the self is a rupture in the identity-of-being of the in-itself, a withdrawal by being in relation to itself and the appearance of presence to self or consciousness. It is only by making itself, Jaya living a customary life of an ideal house wife, for-itself that being aspire to be the cause of itself. But her irony is that she does not seek her freedom but what comes to her unsought. It is precisely for this reason that it has no value. According to Sartre, being and being free is the same. Freedom does not lie outside us. Jaya mistakes it as lying outside her. Her opening words tell the whole truth: To achieve anything, to become anything, you've got to be hard and ruthless. Yes, even if you want to be a saint, if you want to love the whole world, you've got to stop loving individual human beings first... (that long silence p.1)

When she started writing, she found words coming with a facility that pleased her. But she also felt shamed because they seem too easy. She makes a deliberate effort of positing her awareness as an object of reflection. In the very first chapter, she says, "self revelation is the cruel process," (that long silence p.1) precisely because it shows you your ten different faces. She adds she never thought so earlier about innocent young girls, but writing about herself that she now embarks on, is a different experience. Now as she says, "I'm writing on us. Of Mohan and me-and I know that – you can never be the heroine of your own story."(that long silence p.1) She recalls what Kamat once said, "Your face is like your name."(that long silence p.1) She was fascinated by the idea but she did not know that, as she comes to know now in the act of writing about herself, as about Mohan, that she has many faces, that the phenomena of the self is transphenomenal. Deshpande following Sartre believes that –that all consciousness is of consciousness something, as Husserl also put it, that is, "consciousness is intentional and directive, pointing to a transcendental object rather than itself."² Heidegger postulates that here is the germ for Sartre's later view of man being-in-the world. Jaya has all along been living as one among other women, never reflecting on herself.

Shashi Deshpande as an existentialist renders the transphenomenal character of Jaya, through the projection of suffering that she undergoes while realizing her existence. Jaya's dealings with her previous experiences-her pretences that she would have behaved only as Mohan's wife, which was taken to be her only identity after

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marriage- may be compared with Sartre's concept of 'bad faith'. According to Sartre, "all sorts of pretences, pretentiousness and willful ignorance are obstacles to free choice, and are therefore morally bad."(Sartre p.49) Sartre is right when he says that whenever the in-itself tries to be for-itself, one is always shamed, made an object among other objects, a thing, in her case, as her father, symbolizing patriarchy did. Sartre further adds, "There is a relation of the for-itself with the in-itself in the presence of the Other."(Sartre p.472) After her marriage, she was again made an object by her husband who always while they set out to go to a movie, rebuked her saying "There's no need to hurry...at the worst we'll miss the ads, and who wants to see them anyway?"(TLS p.3) But she did love ads perhaps more than the film but she never confessed it to Mohan, fearing it might invite her objectification.

Shashi Deshpande would admit that Sartre describes how our consciousness of ourselves undergoes a radical transformation upon the recognition of the existence of other conscious beings besides ourselves. Being herself a victim of existential problems of life, Jaya is made to understand that she is no more merely her in-itself. Her consciousness has infinitely overflowed the 'I' which ordinarily serve to unify her. All through the various phases of her life she was afraid of her own spontaneity because it felt itself to be beyond freedom. If one asked her what she was afraid of, she would have said 'nothingness.' In other words, she felt vertigo or anguish before her recognition that she was afraid of nothing. This growth of consciousness of nothing is not new with her; it has always been there with her, howsoever dim. In order not to confront it, she, as she now writes, was like one of the members of the Chorus of Greek drama, distanced from suffering, trying just to live "one foot in front of another, until death came to us in a natural form."(TLS p.4) As we have seen Jaya is haunted by feelings of anguish, anxiety and nothingness. This nothingness by means of "bad faith" reveals that Jaya, being-in-itself, the being who is what she is and who is not what she is. Sartre consistently mentions that in order to get out of bad faith, one must realize that his or her existence and his formal projection of self are distinctly separate and within the limits of human control.

Shashi Deshpande asserts that Jaya becomes conscious of her freedom. But on becoming conscious of her freedom the reader may

ask what will become of this freedom if it turns its back upon itself in the value attached to it? Will freedom carry this value with whatever she does and even while turning back upon it, as she tried to resist it? When she glances reflectively back, Jaya wanted to throw Mohan's own words back at him—that the trodden worm turning, which is, objectifying him, now that he had left her in the lurch. But unfortunately, she questions whether she has ever been a trodden-worm. The point Deshpande makes is that objectification is not one-sided: it is always mutual objectification. Even a worm when trodden bites back. That shows that the very act of writing amounts to reviewing her life as an act of a worm biting back. As we have seen, Jaya experienced a pause in her being, as she detached herself from herself; from her earlier self to see clearly what it meant to be, a pair of bullocks yoked together, asks herself:

No, what I have 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 in same direction. To go in different direction would be painful: what animals would voluntarily choose pain? p11-12

Deshpande would admit that the burden of the tradition would make Jaya carry the cross of marriage on her back, but now when she recalls she feels no reason to be bound to Mohan, "All his assurance has deserted him," p.8 while shifting to Dadar flat. Jaya feels herself as an incomplete self and she tries to move from in-itself to for-itself. She feels quite lost in delicate web of emotions and gets shattered. Thus she builds a barrier of hostile silence around herself. Jaya as being for-itself, is on the way to completion, as it is vacuous and fluid. The world around her and his place in her life becomes so insignificant and irrelevant, that she feels humiliated and embarrassed. She expresses her anger by saying, "Oh yes, there had been certainly no dearth of advice when I got married; but nobody bothered to tell me what to do when a marriage was over." (p.138)

Shashi Deshpande has been at pains replying the charge that her heroines do not change. In an interview with Holmstrom, the novelist asserts, "Jaya has changed, this is what matters, not whether she is going back to Mohan or not. It is what has happened inside her that is going to shape her life now."³ And this is what she says matters, not whether she is going back to her husband or staying away from him. She has at least lost the fear of existence. This is what has happened

with Saru, Jaya, et. al. It is this rupture that the present paper focuses on, a rupture which is primordial – a hole in the heart, as Jaya says, at the end of the novel. It is because Jaya plumbs this hole and finds nothingness, freedom, and anxiety. Of course, her former self like that of other sisters in other novels, has been, she finds, full and fixed but like them Jaya's character also experiences incompleteness, some lack as Jacques Derrida would say. She remains silent, inert and objectified but she has a consciousness of something unrealized potency and lack of determinate structure. In their stream of thoughts both Jaya and Mohan look at their marital relationship where there is nothing but suppressed silence. That's why Jaya wants to move from in-itself to for-itself. She reflects, "Nothing between us...nothing between me and Mohan. We live together but there had been only emptiness between us." (185) Having realized her complete self, she revolts. For her, "in this life itself there are so many crossroads, so many choices." (192) And she now rejects the image of two bullocks yoked together. She has already changed in her thought, though not in action. This is how Jaya feels at the end of her writing. By change, Deshpande does not mean to jump out of married life, but to make it possible. Indeed Jaya says:It's possible that we may not change even over long period of time. But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything known now it is this: life has always to be made possible. p.193

Shashi Deshpande further mentions that Mohan is an egoist with its two forms – sadism and masochism. Jaya is aware that egoism cannot be overcome by altruism. That is why Jaya would not beg for altruism on the part of Mohan. She knows too well that what happened at the office, he expects her to agree with him. She knows that once she agrees with him, authority will seep into Mohan once more. But as she says, "It is no longer possible for me." p.192 However, she would have to plug that hole in the heart that she will have to speak, to listen and she will have to erase the silence between them. This is what Deshpande says is the mark of change in Jaya. It is change in the attitude that for her matters. There was a time when Jaya wanted to be completely Mohan's wife but now that kind of synthetic life was not possible for her to live. The hole in the heart is Sartrean in-itself. Jaya also once thought that she was complete as Mohan's wife. In fact, she tried to cut down that portion of herself which was not integrated with

Mohan's, but was not possible for her to do. She recalls the final words of Lord Krishna to Arjuna, "Do as you desire." (p.192) Deshpande now moves towards integrating existentialism and humanism. She finds that Krishna also conferred humanness on Arjuna. Therefore, Deshpande feels that this ethical stance of existentialism surpasses egoism and altruism, beyond also, any behavior which is called disinterestedness. Thus Jaya's urge for being for-itself wishes to be unidentified with the Other's freedom as founding its own being in-itself.

However, on the threshold of freedom, if not Shashi Deshpande dithers, Jaya indulges in bad faith. This shows that she had mistaken her freedom. She indeed had abandoned her freedom. She kept her quite saying perhaps let others do what she cannot. Shashi Deshpande as an existentialist finds Jaya pursuing a double course, a synthetic fusion of in-itself with the for-itself. She wants both security and her authentic self, and thus tries to be God. As Sartre at the end of *Being and Nothingness* says: Everything happens as if the world, man, and the man-in-the-world succeeded in realizing only a missing God. Everything happens therefore as if the in-itself and the for-itself were presented in a state of disintegration in relation to an ideal synthesis. Not that the integration have ever *taken place* but on the contrary precisely because it is always indicated and always impossible.⁴ It is thus both Sartre and Shashi Deshpande find human beings, a futile passion.

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Retrieving Identity: Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*

JapPreet Kaur Bhangu *
Pradeep Kaur**

Michael Ondaatje, the first Canadian writer to win the prestigious Booker Prize in 1992, is celebrated as a contemporary literary treasure. In his works he attempts a re-evaluation of history by focusing on relations between the margins and the centre, the personal and the public. As such his works readily lend themselves to post-modern and post-colonial approaches to literature. Although best known as a novelist, Ondaatje's work also encompasses memoir, poetry, and film, and reveals a passion for defying conventional forms. From the memoir of his childhood, *Running In The Family, to his Governor-General's Award-winning book of poetry, There's a Trick With a Knife I'm Learning To Do* (1979), to his classic novel, *The English Patient* (1992). His works are characterized by a bleakly evocative narrative and minimalist dialogue, blending documentary and fictional accounts of real characters. The present paper attempts to trace and evaluate Ondaatje's explorations of identity as retrieved from history and memory. The focus is on *Coming Through Slaughter*, in which Ondaatje recreates the forgotten story of Billy Bolden, transforming it with such ingenuity that it occupies the space between history and memory, reality and imagination.

First published in 1976, the novel *Coming Through Slaughter* is a fictionalized version of the life of the New Orleans jazz pioneer Buddy Bolden. Charles "Buddy" Bolden (September 6, 1877 – November 4, 1931) was an African American musician. He is regarded a key figure in the development of a New Orleans style of rag-time music which later came to be known as jazz. The novel covers the last months of Bolden's sanity in 1907 when his music becomes more radical and his behavior more erratic. The novel portrays this historical figure in a way that draws on his actual life, but as Cynthia F. Wong succinctly points

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out, Ondaatje “ blurs the generic distinctions between poetry and prose, factual verisimilitude and fictional reconstruction” (289) in order to explore the novel’s central theme. The novel comprises of a series of events strung together as snap shots demanding from readers to imagine and retrieve the self of Bolden from them.

The novel is explicitly about Bolden’s identity as expressed in his music, but implicitly, it is about his identity as a black man whose musical insistence on freedom is thwarted by worsening racism in New Orleans at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet as Ondaatje observes, many interpreted Bolden’s subsequent “crack-up as a morality tale of a talent that debauched itself. But his life at this time had a fine and precise balance to it...” (7). Ondaatje portrays Bolden, an American of African ancestry as a tragic artist, a man whose musical genius isolates him from friends and family and eventually leads to his insanity. The black-white racial conflict however does not become the focus of the novel. Rather structured like jazz music, the novel presents a fragmented, multi-voiced, episodic narrative that draws even an unwilling reader into its passion.

In this ordinary world, Ondaatje takes up the issue of infidelity. There are no accusations, no cold revenge, no plotting, no cursing, no murdering; but silent suffering- an ache in the soul- a sublimation and pouring out of the heart in the art i.e. music. As Ondaatje portrays, the cruelties of external world pervade the personal one too. Shakespeare’s Hamlet could rightly aver, “Frailty- thy name is woman”. But here both men and women are frail. Why so? Not an easy question to answer. In an unjust world where the primary struggle is that of survival, pure bonds of love are impossible to forge. Infidelity has remained curse of all ages, civilizations and tribes. Wounds and woes of infidelity lead to unbearable pain that becomes difficult to express. Why one falls in bondage, why seeks solace in this bondage, one does not realize. Why man and woman wish to break this bondage? Perhaps no one can ever describe. Buddy has learned that Tom Pickett is having an affair with his common-law wife, Nora Bass. Pickett is an extremely handsome pimp in the city of New Orleans. Bolden’s wife, Nora, was formally part of Pickett’s business endeavors. After Pickett boasts about his relationship with Nora, Bolden doubts the stability of his construction of Nora, “If Nora had been with Pickett. Had really been with Pickett as he said. Had jumped off Bolden’s cock and sat for half an hour later

on Tom Pickett’s mouth on Canal Street. Then the certainties he loathed and needed were liquid at the root” (75). What emerges in the novel thus is the murky world at the very “rag and bone shop” of society where alcohol and sex make up for pain and love, and music exudes ineffably from the fabric of blasted lives. Bolden’s musical progress is differentiated from that of his contemporaries and followers as clear and even transcendental, particularly at the point where he becomes irretrievably insane. But why such a talented and pure spirited man should linger on in the mental asylum for all his life and die anonymous. Herein lies the true ache of novel and its genuine pathos. Buddy is neither killed or murdered nor crucified but is slaughtered on the altar of infidelity.

When Bolden meets Robin Brewitt, Ondaatje observes that he “nearly fainted” (27); he loses control of his senses, and, perhaps in more romantic terms, his heart. The early stages of Bolden’s relationship with Robin are marked clearly by an ongoing loss of control or, more accurately, by the loss of the balance that characterized his life with Nora. Robin seems to represent an alternate ‘other’ for Bolden - a second chance, as it was, for his constructing a kind of truth for himself. It is stated repeatedly that even though Bolden has numerous women throwing themselves at him, he truly loves Nora. However, after Bolden runs from New Orleans, he finds himself without Nora. As Ondaatje portrays, Bolden does not really love Robin. Robin is his outlet. She blurs into Nora- and Nora is not his. He is completely alienated and devastated- devoid of everything- including his kith and kin. Only a slow and anonymous death is his destiny- a destiny of every modern man. The story is told in many fragments and many voices: Actual accounts of Bolden’s life and performances, oral history, lists of songs, biographical facts, narrative, dialogue, interior monologues, psychiatric reports, bits of poetry and lyrics, the author’s own voice through which Ondaatje weaves a series of brilliantly improvised ‘sets’. There are blues, there are the hymns, there is rhythm, there is free jazz, there is melody, soul, mood, wild aggression with notes flung out in pain and hurt and it all creates an atmosphere, an environment. New Orleans’ whores, pimps, drugs, booze, clarinets and cornets, jazz and jazzmen, ship builders and photographers and love and lunacy.

Buddy also breaks the boundaries of love; he sacrifices his wife and children in order to pursue something more with Robin. In the

Parade on fifth morning, Buddy gives his last performance. In the Liberty-Iberville concert, during the performance, Bolden is fascinated by a dancing girl who follows the rhythms and dances to his tunes intoxicatingly. Bolden's self is completely immersed into music, so much that he even forgets the audience. The mounting tension between Bolden and the girl is reflected in the prose of the passage as run-on sentences break into fragments and then continue to the climactic point of Bolden's complete immersion into music: In fact, the passage reads much like a metaphor for the act of sex. Bolden's love life is revealed when he describes the beautiful dancer as a culmination of his lovers. Then with the gorgeous dancer at the parade who pushes him to further limits leading to his destruction: "All my body moves to my throat and I speed again and she speeds tired again....I CAN'T SEE. Air floating through the blood to the girl red hitting the blind spot I can feel others turning, the silence of the crowd, can't see" (131-32). Thus the instrument and the player become one. Diffusing himself, rather melting himself, blowing out himself through the cornet, his body, nerves, veins, sperms and aches of the soul find release. The whole scene is so built; the pitch of the music is raised to such sublimity that everybody is purged of his or her sin. The pathos of the jazz turns lyrics into hymns. The dancing girl appears to be a nymph and Buddy becomes the mystic piper. The appearance of a dancing woman who reminds him of both Nora and Robin releases his latent insanity, which is manifested in a stroke that he suffers while playing his cornet. Bolden spends the rest of his life in an asylum in nearby Jackson, returning to New Orleans only for burial in 1931. It is devastating to watch him confined, suffer abuse and gradually slip into madness.

Jon Saklofske recognizes that Ondaatje rescues Buddy Bolden from historical obscurity by elevating and complicating the musician's largely forgotten history with a self-conscious and largely fictional synthesis of memory and imagination. The liberties Ondaatje takes in *Coming Through Slaughter* with his subject to achieve this re-presentation and the ownership of the portrait that results, exposes this type of authorial activity as a problematic appropriation. As a collector, Ondaatje becomes the owner and an essential part of this transformed and personalized image of Bolden. Further, Saklofske rightly argues that Ondaatje preserves Bolden's presence, actively confronts historical exclusivity, and interrupts his own authority over his subject. Although

his interaction with actual historical figures decreases with successive novels, Ondaatje's personal encounter with the impersonal machine of history continues, asserting itself repeatedly as a successful strategy against destructiveness or authoritative exclusion.

Ondaatje tells of Buddy Bolden's descent into his own hell, unwittingly or self-created, we do not know, but, in the process generating a level of art and beauty unsurpassed in the postmodern era. It is a story of despair, madness, loneliness, of the viciousness of life affecting high art, of art struggling to transcend life's miseries, not always successfully, but ultimately a tale of aching lyricism. Ondaatje's language is innovative and appropriate and his strong theme is rich with universal implications. Ondaatje uses technique of Repetition with regards to the title. Twice in the book, Ondaatje includes references to a town north of Baton Rouge called Slaughter, through which Buddy passes twice. The most concrete theme is the idea of the setting as slaughter. The acceptance of promiscuity is a major cause of conflict and downfall. Ondaatje includes a description of "the mattress whores" who have been kicked out of Storyville for showing evidence of having sexually transmitted diseases. They are literally rotten. Promiscuity also seems to "rot" Bolden. By the time he has had his gratuitous fun in Storyville, married Nora, abandoned Nora, and had an affair with another woman, Bolden has lost his passion for jazz and is obsessed with sex. "I desire every woman I remember" (99), he says while he is isolated outside New Orleans.

Ondaatje thus explores the connection between creative talent and self-destruction. He however does not try to answer any questions for his readers. He gives the facts, filling in where needed, and lets the reader decide what to think. After Bolden's return to New Orleans, he is driven into deeper madness than before until he eventually experiences a climactic breaking point during a parade. Some say it was the result of "trying to play the devil's music and hymns at the same time." Others say it was from too many general excesses. Whatever the cause, Ondaatje makes it clear that, for Bolden living in New Orleans in the early 20th century, the road to anonymity was much more difficult than the road to fame.

To sum up, Ondaatje attempts to retrieve the story of Buddy Bolden which lies hidden beneath layers of time. He draws as much from history, as from memory, re-mixing facts with fiction, reality

with imagination, even reinventing the self of Bolden by mixing him with what he terms in the postscript as 'personal pieces of friends and fathers.' In the novel thus, Ondaatje grapples with the intertwined notions of history, memory and identity portraying how memory affects history, to preserve, as also to distort. Identity as such has to be retrieved, reinvented and restructured from the obscure and impersonal discourse of history. The novel however leaves that task to the readers.

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Decoding Oppressive Ideologies of Gender: Search for a 'huper' World

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Obviously the most oppressed of any oppressed group will be its women.

(Tanika Sarkar. Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation)

Women as subjects have always been ideologised, ism-ised and criticised so far as their standings for their well being go, especially over the critical and crucial question of 'Women Empowerment'. Through their movements, writings and political stand ups they have time and again recognised a need to raise a voice or at least to stand up to oppression, be it of any kind. They cannot afford to be sanguine and must take a politically confrontational view of their stand if they are to recognise the politics of their own theories so as to become politically effective. To do so, a theoretically enlightened criticism is needed. The politics of gender and the subterranean ideologies that lie under the fundamental question of their identity have to be then decoded.

The pressures of our times make it impossible for us to overlook the ideological constructs of any discourse. The systematic oppression by patriarchy along with sexism has amply shown that it was not an act of unconsciousness. Despite the longstanding and vigorous women's movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing the structure of its political and social institutions and determining the opportunities open to women and men. The negotiation and conflict between patriarchy and the women's movement are central to the constitution of the nation-state. This paper explores these contentious issues and attempts to critique the politics of gender and identity which is at play in all the arenas of a woman's life, be it political, social, economic, personal or political and explore the possibilities of a *Utopian* world where *hupers* exist (Baxi, 98)

Some basic questions regarding the critical arena of women empowerment and gender issues that torment feminists since ages and are still debatable are: "What is a Woman", "are women a political class or a discursive category?" and "is the space of blank subversion

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to be always dominated by the masculine discourse?" "Why were women invisible, not only in mainstream histories but also socialist histories?", "Why did political theory show so little interest in the questions of patriarchy and of women's subjugation/oppression/exploitation?" This paper explores the hidden possibilities in providing tentative answers to these questions, by debating on the different standpoints available.

The term Indian women's movement is highly contested. The appellation of "Indian", when used for the women's movement, implies a political and cultural singularity that obscures the movement's diversity, differences, and conflicts. The problem is not simply one of disunities but rather has to do with intractable conflicts involving the word "women" that derive from the central position of gender in post-colonial Indian culture and politics. Indeed, processes of gender including the construction of identity, roles and relations based on sexual differences, played a key role in the historical formation of the Indian nation state. But gender cannot be separated from other, conflicting political identities, all of which play a crucial role in the life of the nation. Modern day criticism gave the following answer to these suppositions by proclaiming that social norms cannot be dissociated from the body which is always situated at a position from where women have a choice to use it to their advantage or be subservient to the conventional exploitation at the hands of the patriarchal set up.

Gender has been a central 'issue' in India since the colonial encounter. An overwhelming preoccupation with the "woman's question" arose from the 19th century social reform movement, crucially anti-colonial nationalism, and remains a point of crisis in India's cultural, social, and political space. The recognition of gender as an issue forms the basis for Indian women's movement.

An Indian woman's life is typically flavoured by stereotypes since ages: oppression, fear, docility and so on. There is no denying that the caste system, the traditions of dowries, arranged marriages and a Hindu woman's scriptural duty to bear sons all contribute to the stereotyping and misrepresentation of women. It is not surprising then that feminist activism has found a ripe battleground in the subcontinent. Periyar's (*The Thought of Periyar E.V.R*) resolution of the women's question focuses firmly again on gender, female body and self. Unlike

the nationalists he did not consider women as fruitful subjects for a discourse on tradition or the past, nor did he perceive their condition a mere index of a nation's well being. The ideal of women securing their sexual and reproductive rights remained a persistent motive in Periyar's writings. He believed that the intervention of men will only tighten the bonds that hold women down. Men's ostensible respect for women, their statements which proclaim their concern for women's freedom are meant to deceive merely. It then becomes necessary to detach men's sensibility from an obsessive concern with female sexuality (for men would also be judged and hence could not unilaterally assume the role of judging patriarchs), but it would serve to liberate women from the regimen of the body imposed by a self-serving culture of masculinity. Women often consented to their own oppression and devaluation much like the people of the lower castes.

Today women's movement in India is deeply cleaved. There is, nevertheless, a vigorous search for a viable feminist politics. To succeed, feminists must develop transformative politics, managing and hopefully transcending class, caste and community differences. This paper addresses these critical challenges. It seeks, through historical analysis, to understand the cleavage in the women's movement by not only examining the patriarchal pressures, but it also mines the promise of a transformative feminist politics. Today there is not one women's movement in India but an overarching collective in which gender politics is articulated. Yet the multiplicity of sites, disciplines and discourse makes for vibrant gender politics.

In 1974 Indira Gandhi, India's prime minister, told reporters: "I do not regard myself as a woman. I am a person with a job to do" (*The Asian Student*, 23 November 1974). A year before, a popular magazine for "modern" women released a special Independence Day issue with Indira Gandhi portrayed as Goddess Durga on the cover. It said, "to be a woman-a wife, a mother, an individual- in India means many things. It means that you are the storehouse of tradition and culture and, in contrast, a volcano of seething energy, of strength and power that can motivate a whole generation to change its values, its aspirations, its very concept of civilised life" (*Femina* 14, 17 August 1973). Women in Indian politics as in their personal lives have always negotiated these two extreme poles: as the unsexed equal or the highly feminized goddess or queen. They have hardly been considered as

human beings capable of faltering and dwindling. Women on the whole have attained little democratic representation, either in number or in terms of their specific gender interests. Female segregation and seclusion by the patriarchy itself offered opportunities to build women's collectives that rejected male tutelage but accepted traditional patriarchal gender roles. This social feminism allowed a remarkable hegemony of elite women to speak for "all Indian women" from a united platform. This was the time of women joining the political struggle and of their democratic representation in the legislatures.

Modern day writings on women also explore a range of different feminist perspectives emphasising concepts of women, power and resistance and investigate how women have been defined by dominant social and political structures and how they must resist such definitions, both within and outside those structures. The intricate relationship between gender and violence, domesticity and the imperial trade, and the gendering of nationalism within the spheres of imperial and anti-western systems of knowledge and power were largely the issues taken up. The body is subject to the biological or natural laws as well as to the social determination of its function and meaning. This ambiguity is essentially intrinsic to the existence of women. It must be clear to all that she is neither wholly sexed, nor completely a cultural product. A complete woman is both sex and gender. To know what it is to be a woman is to live a fully embodied life in varying situations.

The position of women in marriage has hardly changed and world conferences are negligible in their contribution to women's "basic reproductive rights." Men continue to own and control female creative capacity and to assume that the subordination of women in society is just and natural. They are denied a human status in extreme situations with the guardians of society sitting over the issues of rights and doing nothing about it. The crucial question of 'Women empowerment' in the changing times leads the feminists and gender critiques to converge their visions in the belief that feminist empowerment and fulfilment can emerge only through a process of dismantling the patriarchal edifice of knowledge or by deconstructing the faces of power, namely the traditional role perceptions and normative discourses and practises. Then follows the need of reconstructing of a new feminist *utopia* relative to the needs of the individual but free from intense submerging in tradition and culture. Indian women let alone

Third World Women cannot be categorised monolithically. *Utopia* thus emerges in the study, in the ultimate sense as a vision and a 'trace truth', relative to the cultural, social, material, economic, political, physical and mental settings and positions within a given social pattern and norm.

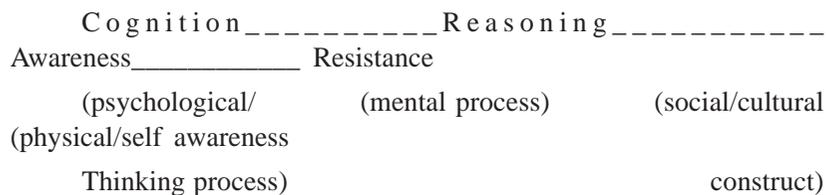
Feminism has expanded the scope of Marxist theory, widened the reach of its politics, including the aspirations of women in its utopian enterprise and so on. Indian Feminism is primarily a socialist feminism. Indeed it is one of the most important socialist feminist movements in the world today. We are living through a very important time politically, theoretically and artistically. It is also a very challenging time in terms of democratic relations. A woman is not simply a woman. She is also working class or bourgeois, dalit or upper-class, Hindu or Muslim and so on. As a person she is a complex and polyphonous composition. Her position these days demands her to be self critical which in itself is not enough. These are not just issues of personal ethics, they are extremely knotted issues and major tasks for the feminist movement. However there is a huge expansion of the territories in which political contests can consciously take place. Earlier, issues such as gender, caste, race, community were kept under leash, by designating them as social and ethical questions, which could be addressed either through top-down "reform" or by "attitude- change". Today we are able to show the working of these exclusions, repressions, subjugations, delegitimations, expropriations in a myriad, everyday situations. Gender equality refers to that stage of human social development at which "the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not be determined by the fact of being born male or female." In other words, the need of the hour is to provide a stage when both men and women realize their full potential.

Economic empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which the one's without power gain greater control over their lives. This means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. It involves power to, power with and power within. Some define empowerment as a process of awareness and conscientization, of capacity building leading to transformative action. This involves ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. With reference to women the power relation that has to be involved includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, market and

the state. Importantly it involves at the psychological level women’s ability to assert themselves and this is constructed by the ‘gender roles’ assigned to her specially in a culture which resists change like India.

The promise of *utopia* should never turn into dystopia. It should never manifest the grim tragic irony of disillusionment. What women’s movements all over the world and in India down the ages, are able to achieve is not a blissful separatist retreat from the world, but an individualistic and subjective feminist utopia within their worlds that offers a synthesis of sociality and individuality within the normative community. The society is run by a libidinal and cultural, hence political typically masculine economy; that as a tendency and tradition puts the male before the female, the patriarchy above the matriarchy, the husband before the wife and thus enhances the cause of female subjugation. This is the locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously, and in a manner that’s frightening. Questioning the validity of the set given values is crucial then. However creation of separate value locks, norms, traditions and cultures that protect the interest of both the genders is a gargantuan task that needs to be undertaken and is already underway.

India has not rejected the ‘primordial’ feminine primacy. When we designate the eternal feminine and masculine principles it is the former, the *prakriti* (nature or the female principle), which is the active, and the *purusha* (male or the masculine principle), which is the passive principle. Feminist Utopia is unimaginable without both. Women Empowerment can play a positive role here in reconstructing and revolutionising the whole idea of the ‘*Utopian*’ construct and work towards being a combative force against the patriarchal ideology to free both men and women. It hopes to create this change by functioning successfully as a small non- violent and egalitarian society within the shell of the patriarchal society with the hope that it will keep on growing larger day by day. For the *Utopia* to become a reality a gradual progression has to be followed from



37

process/positive anger

Not aggression)

The changing global and Indian paradigm offers her unprecedented opportunities. There is a thin line between rebellion and questioning. She has to introspect and raise her competence. There are three main actions: she needs to talk, audit where she is and what she is, lastly renew herself. We need what Gayatri Spivak calls, “a strategic essentialism” to combat patriarchy and create a *Utopia* for *hupers* to live and enjoy.

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1

Genesis of Feminism in Mulk Raj Anand's *Gauri*

.Sadaf Shah*

Feminist movement began in 1960s in the West. Since then much has been written on several issues relating to women. The women writers of those times faced rigid rules in the name of social censure. Only a few feminist writers made their contribution to the women's movement against oppression, subjugation and subordination such as Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Marilyn French and Margaret Atwood. They have contributed greatly to the movement and have been internationally acclaimed as feminist novelists. Gail Chester and Sigrid Nielson wrote, "Writing plays a vital part in forming our perceptions of our lives as women, in working out our feminist views and in communicating them to others" (Chester and Nielson 43).

A new wave of feminism began across the world. This influenced India also and resulted in a new class of Indian feminists. The prominent and important feminist novelists in the category are Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, R.P. Jhabwala, Kamala Markandaya to name a few. These writers occupy very important and prestigious position in Indian Writing in English. Their writings not only reflect the position of women but also project protest against the cruelty carried out on the women. There was a kind of revolt in their writing against all odds that a woman is subjected to like mismatched marriages, ways in which a wife is treated by her husband, etc. Mostly the protagonists of their novels are women of a typical Indian society. The plot of their story is woven around the woman who is oppressed and suppressed in patriarchal society. Fiction written in English in India today, especially by women writers shows the variety of backgrounds that they hail from. Therefore, in these writings we find a glimpse of women's suppressed existence in the poor, the middle class and even the upper class aristocratic society. Such writings have made woman visible in Indian English literature whereas earlier she was mostly non-existent or simply presented as the 'other' to man. In the words of Sarla Palkar, "For a long time, woman has existed as a gap, as an absence in literature (Palkar, 163).

Not only the women, even some male writers too have expressed their concern for the problems faced by women in male dominated

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society. Mulk Raj Anand is one such writer who concentrates on women's sufferings in traditional Indian society. Anand was always troubled by the sufferings of women. Through his novel, *Gauri*, first published in 1960 under the title, *The Old Woman and the Cow*, Anand not only advocates a protest against the sufferings of the women but also presents a forceful argument for the equal rights and empowerment of women.

Anand's *Gauri* is an off spring of Feminism in India which as a movement was just entering our patriarchal society then. It is journey of Gauri's sufferings and it starts with her arranged marriage which is the norm of our Indian society that a girl has to marry a person of her parents' choice and not of hers. To quote Margaret Berry, "India is a hapless country where a host of turbulations, as pictured in Anand's novels, begins with the arranged marriages. Here the partners are like oxen sold or given in marriages arranged by their parents" (Berry 56). She is married to a village farmer, Panchi. As it is common in India, Gauri has to live in a joint family with Panchi's uncle, Mola Ram and aunt, Kesaro. Panchi is a typical Indian husband of male dominated society who considers Gauri as a mere commodity to satisfy his physical needs. Anand supplements this in the following expression, "Gauri is like a cow, very gentle and very good" (Anand 81).

The novel is critical not only of patriarchal system but also brings to light that woman is woman's biggest enemy. It's Kesaro who makes Gauri's life miserable just for the reason that she likes Panchi and cannot tolerate any other woman in his life. She not only tortures Gauri but also accuses her of being friendly with young men like the subedar's son Rajguru which is not permissible in Indian society. Kesaro takes it to Panchi and she is beaten mercilessly so that she does not protest. All this not only brings tension between Panchi and Gauri but also conflict with his uncle Mola Ram. Panchi has to leave the house and also the barn. Rafique Chacha, a muslim friend, helps them by offering him a part of his barn to live. This brings in closeness between Panchi and Gauri but for a short period of time.

Anand has rightly brought in transformation in the character of Gauri as Kesaro tries to spoil their relation by blaming her for the separation of the two families; she pushes her out of her house. One morning Gauri tells Panchi that "we shall soon have another mouth to feed" (Anand 101). She is kicked out by Panchi. Though he tried to

suppress sometimes by beating her and sometimes by kicking her but she has reached a position where in order to save her child she gathers courage and leaves for her parent's home where she can give birth to her baby.

Anand stresses the need for a woman to change in view of what the novelist portrays a marginalized woman i.e. oppressed, ostracized, abandoned or deprived in the character of Gauri. K. D. Verma also seems to agree to him and writes, "As a student of European thought, Anand is certainly, familiar with other forms of humanism- the Greek ideal of humanism, the eighteenth century notions of humanism. Marx's humanism and Forster's humanism, Anand's liberal humanism emphasizes both individual freedom and a progressive reconstruction of a new social order" (Verma 95). On reaching her paternal home the story takes a new shape. She is sold to a banker, Seth Jai Ram by her mother, Laxmi and uncle, Amru, so that they can pay mortgage on their two houses and cow, Chandari, the only source of their livelihood. This brings shock to her. She shouts and yells but in vain and finally accepts her defeat. She is married to a person who is much older than her. Though Laxmi sells her but Anand does not depict her as negative a character as Kesaro who tries to bring in hurdles in Gauri's life to ruin her. Rather Laxmi is presented as a victim of circumstances. For Laxmi Anand aptly writes in the novel, "the woman had just no thought of morality and felt that one husband or another was all the same, both for her or her daughter" (Anand 226).

The struggle turns more severe and bitter when Gauri's life brings her to Hoshiarpur where the Seth lives. When she reaches she is running down with high fever. She meets Colonel Mahindra who is a doctor and in whom she sees as a father figure. He is mouthpiece of Anand. His ideology is same as of Anand. He wants to bring in social equality. He wants to educate people so that they can live in peace and harmony. He is against repression and exploitation. He is a very sensitive and a pleasant man. He helps Gauri to escape from there and she starts assisting him in the hospital. In the hospital she also meets Dr. Batra, Colonel Mahindra's partner who harasses her sexually but is never successful in his acts. Seth tries to win her but fails as she still loves Panchi. Inder Nath Kher rightly remarks, "Gauri refused to accept the hypocritical values of her society and its double standards of sexual morality" (Kher 43).

Indian feminism seems to be softer than the rigid parameters adopted in the Western concept of Feminism. In India woman is still considered as a reservoir of patience and courage and is the one who is supposed to maintain a balance in the family by submitting herself to male dominance whether in nuclear or joint family. Victor D' Souza writes, "One may therefore, say that unity and integrity of the joint family are maintained through the subordination of woman by man. In fact, according to the traditional Hindu code, woman is always deemed to be subordinate to man, first to her father, then to her husband, and finally to her son" (D' Souza 53). That is why Gauri decides to go back to her husband, Panchi. She wants to forgive him and start again. But her miseries do not end here. When she comes back to her husband, the people of the village start talking about her life in Hoshiarpur. They start questioning her chastity. Panchi is a weak person and starts believing what everybody is talking about Gauri. But here we see transformation in the character of Gauri. She is no more that weak willed person. She starts raising her voice when Panchi hits her she says, "If you strike me again, I will hit you back" (Anand 283). It shows that she realizes her position as a human being and becomes aware of her individuality and self respect.

Again following the overriding traditional values very much endowed in Indian culture, Anand has compared Gauri to the mythological character of Sita from *Ramayana*. Gauri like Sita has to prove her chastity. Like Sita had to stay with Ravana, Gauri stays for some time in the household of the banker, Seth. Sita was reunited with Rama as Gauri was reunited with her husband, Panchi and as Rama rejects Sita so does Panchi due to social pressures. Anand highlights the boldness shown by Gauri unlike the old Myth where Sita accepts the sufferings; Gauri rejects the old taboos and heads for a new life. Like Sita she does not want to accept the defeat, she strongly wants to project her identity and decides to go to Dr. Mahindra's hospital to give birth to her baby and thereafter lead her life with dignity.

Emerging out of her sufferings and struggle, Gauri once talking to her friend says, "He (Panchi) pretended to be a lion among the men of the village. But really, he is a coward. They are telling him that Ram turned out Sita because everyone doubted her chastity during her stay with Ravana. I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me. I shall just go out and be forgotten of him" (Anand 237). Here we see

development in the character of Gauri. In the first chapter we saw Gauri as suppressed and fearful but now she appears a strong willed person. C. J. George states, “cow like gentle Gauri presented in the first chapter, undergoes epic transformation mainly through suffering and at the end of the novel, she succeeds in vindicating her right to an independent life, free from the violations and abrasions of male supremacy” (George 174). Such characters like Gauri who achieves her emancipation and breaks all the shackles of suppressed life is a remarkable literary achievement in the Indian context. She chooses her own way. We see emergence of modern woman in the character of Gauri. According to M. Lakshmi Kumara, “the need is to educate woman and to make her aware of her strength which lies within her and her identity she has lost in the midst of neon lights and stage effects” (Kumara 80).

Anand knew that novel writing is a strong medium to sensitize the people about ill treatment of women. He also believed that through Literature change can be brought in and there are many philosophers who believed in his philosophy like Jean-Paul Sarte who writes, “If I am given this world, its injustices it is not so that I may contemplate them coldly, but that I may animate them with my indignation, that I may disclose them and create them with their nature as injustices that is, an abuse to be suppressed” (Sarte 45).

Commenting on Gauri’s development D. Riemenschneider writes, “With Gauri, Anand clearly propagates an image of a woman totally different from that of traditional Hindu society by emphasizing her right to personal freedom and individual choice against the structures imposed on woman by religion in a patriarchal society (Riemenschneider 184). However, the novel is a reflection of Anand’s concern for woman. He was a feminist and believed that the freedom of Indian woman lies in her right to education and there by gaining financial independence. Through the portrayal of Gauri’s character Anand has conveyed a new dimension to women empowerment within the Indian ethos. Gauri ultimately succeeds in bringing out her true identity by rebelling against the wrongs done to women especially in rural India. She challenges the evil practices of the society and succeeds in her fight against the patriarchal setup which appears to be inspiring flagship in the old rotten hackneyed and conventional tradition of Indian womanhood.

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Giving voice to the marginalized women: A study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*

Arun Bala*

Seema Gupta**

Most of the literary output coming from women writers tends to raise the issue of woman subjugation. In fiction we come across suffering women in varied situations and times. Karachi born and Houston settled Bapsi Sidhwa in her debut novel *The Pakistani Bride* takes the readers into the tribal areas of NWFP. She has given voice to the marginalized women placed in the extremely patriarchal society. The novel focuses on the plight of women whose life is even worse than animals.

Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* is based on a real life incident in Karakoram Mountains. A young Pakistani girl married in the upper province tribes decides to liberate herself from the horribly painful life. The run-away wife was killed by the husband's family when she was on her way to freedom. This incident of honor killing disturbed Sidhwa so much that she decided to write on the issue. She says, "The girl's story haunted on my return to Lahore, as did the expressions on the faces of the tribesmen, the incredibly hard conditions in which they lived. ...The tragedy appeared to reflect the condition of many women of the Indian subcontinent who have no control over their destinies than straying cattle or flood swept insects have on theirs ."In the beginning, the writer had planned only a short story was but after four years, it came out in the form of a full fledged novel.

Analyzing the novel from the psychological point of view can make it a fair reading. Psychologist Fritz Heider's theory says that behaviors can be caused by personal forces (innate nature) or by environmental forces (social paradigm) (p.347). So we can't use different yardsticks for analysis of male and female behavior. If women are culturally situated, men also are not behaving in isolation. So, analysis of innate nature while keeping in mind environmental forces i.e. social paradigms will be just for both men and women in the novel.

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During post partition violence, Qasim, a Kohistani Pathan shifting to Pakistan finds a little orphan girl. His filial emotions are aroused. He adopts her and starts calling her Zaitoon, his own dead daughter's name. Zaitoon is brought up with the best possible care and love by Qasim, his friend Nikka Pehalwan and Nikka's wife Miriam. Though living in Lahore, Qasim used to grow very nostalgic about his birthplace, the mountains in the NWFP. Once in a bout of his love for the long lost land, he promised his daughter's hand to a tribal man for his son. In spite of being an affectionate father, he was unable to fathom the travails, his daughter would undergo in tribes. Zaitoon tries to adjust with back breaking work and only dry maize bread dipped in water to eat but painful beatings by her husband Sakhi is too much for her. Pining for a whiff of fresh air, she runs from the village. Her back journey is fierce struggle for survival in the barren mountainous paths while the whole clan is after her to salvage the honor of the whole tribe and particularly her husband.

The story has four women: Qasim's wife, Zaitoon, her mother in law and Carol, an American woman married to Farukh, a Pakistani army officer. All of them go through the travails of female subjugation. Whether illiterate tribal women or the elite educated Carol, all suffer at the hands of males and the difference is only of degree. Qasim's wife could not control her tears of disappointment when she was married to a ten years old boy in exchange for a small amount of loan which her father could not pay back. The fact that first even Qasim's father had thought of having her as second wife but decided in favor of his son shows how a woman's will and desires are insignificant in the tribal society. Sakhi's mother i.e. Zaitoon's mother-in-law recalls how beautiful and vivacious she was at the time of marriage but now she has become just a caricature due to tough life. Even her son Sakhi can beat her with a stick and she resumes her household chores when the pain from the beating subsides. Here a woman's life is as Simone De Beauvoir says in *The Second Sex*, "full of aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips gently towards death without questioning its purpose." Carol, the American enamored by eastern culture married Farukh. But his jealous enquiries and minute to minute reports are unbearable for her. Major Mushtaq also wants to use her as a "sex thing" but back tracks when she talks about marriage.

But inspite of all this scenario of female subjugation, we find that the men are basically nice and caring. Their behavior is the result of conditioning by centuries old patriarchal paradigms. Zaitoon's husband Sakhi is violent on his consummation night because he was lessoned to be so. But when he finds her weeping the whole day after father's departure, he turns soft and considerate. But a soft husband is a misfit in the system of clan. His brother taunts him scornfully, "How is your wife from the plains? She needs a man to control her." (p.170) The statement pierces Sakhi's male ego and he first beats the bull, then his mother and then Zaitoon with the same stick. When Zaitoon runs away, he is on her trail with other males of the tribe as it is matter of tribal honor. Here also Yunus Khan shouts at him, "Your honour? Why didn't you think of it when you allowed the bitch to run away? You knew she had run. Are you a bugged up eunuch? You should have slit her throat right then"(p.200) At last when he comes to know that Zaitoon has been saved by Major Mushtaq he just needs an assurance from the savior that his honor won't be sullied. He is on the hunting trail of his wife because it is not an act of personal vengeance; he is dispensing justice. The conscience and weight of his race are behind him."(p.235) He falsely tells his father and brother that she is dead and he himself has buried her. His violent behavior had been a product of the patriarchal system where a male is not a 'man' if he is soft towards his wife. He lets his disobedient wife survive as redemption of honor by killing her was the requirement of his clan, not his own. As an individual, he would have devised some compromising formula with a wife coming from non-tribal background. But the problem is that he was programmed to be violent. In the tribal culture, only a woman herself is to be blamed for her plight. When a woman's beheaded body is seen in the river, even Farukh, the army officer's reaction is, "she probably asked for it."(p.226). In such a state of affairs, a man's behavior is bound to be arrogant and violent inspite of his innate goodness.

In the case of Carol, the quantum of suffering is no doubt less. But the gap between her liberal upbringing and the present stifling atmosphere is vast. She is troubled by the attitude of two men: Farukh, her husband and Major Mushtaq his colleague. But Farukh is no more a culprit than Sakhi. He loves Carol but is wary of her independent attitude. He knows that the tribals would surround her, jeer at her or if they got a chance, rape her because for those men, woman is only a

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'sex thing'. With their own women closeted in the four walls and in their burqas, Carol in her American style of dress would be just inviting them who in Farukh's words "could fall in love with holes in trees."(p.176)

Major Mushtaq is another torture for Carol. She is just a sex thing, an entertainment during his remote area posting. He flirts with her after devising distant duties for Farukh. Carol is already fed up with her husband's jealousy and suspicious enquiries. So she is easily enamoured by Mushtaq's liveliness. But when she talks about marriage with him, he remembers his family and wants Carol to continue relations as a mistress. But this very fellow with double standard in his relationship with Carol takes a great risk to save Zaitoon. He knows very well that tribal honor is an extremely sensitive issue for Sakhi and his men. Killing a person coming in the way of salvaging the clan's honor was like killing an insect. But still, he takes the risk, carries Zaitoon wrapped in a blanket on his shoulder and plans her safety.

Thus Sidhwa has given a forceful voice to the marginalized women in the tribal areas of NWFP. But while sympathizing with the women characters, denouncement of men as villains of the piece would be doing injustice to the novel. Bapsi Sidhwa, a socially conscious writer has presented a social system where both the genders are social construct. Only centuries of patriarchal paradigms have conditioned men to be hegemonic and women to be docile and exploited.

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Making of an Artist: Shobha De as Model

Sushilkumar Sindkhedkar*

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Shobha De's journey from a model, journalist, and columnist to fictionist is very interesting and thrilling as well. Shobha De has been many things to many people: supermodel, celebrity journalist and best-selling author; friend, rival, colleague and confidante. In her engagingly candid memoir, a woman who has been a familiar face and name to millions finally reveals the true self behind the public persona. Insiders know that despite her commitment to work and the frantic pace of her life, Shobha De's first priority in life has always been her family. In her book '*Selective Memory: Stories from My Life*' (Penguin Books, India (P) Ltd., 1998) she writes poignantly of her early years, and of her relationship with her parents and siblings, her husband and children. Her high voltage career 'happened' in unexpected ways, starting with her unplanned entry as a teenager into the glamorous world of modeling, and moving on to her high-profile years as a magazine editor, columnist, social commentator, TV scriptwriter and author. In these *avtaars* she keenly observed and astutely chronicled the new India - brash, affluent and ambitious. High society hi-jinks, movie-star follies, and celebrity neuroses - none of these escaped her unsparing eye. And now in her '*Selective Memory*' she tells it all, just as it was, just as she saw it. In her inimitably forthright fashion, she writes of the choices she made, the decisions she took and the influences that shaped her. Her '*Selective Memory*' is remarkable for the honesty with which it captures the essence of a fascinating woman who has become a legend in her own time.

Born in 1948, in Maharashtra, in the conservative family of Govind Rajadhyaksha and his wife Shakuntala. Shobha De was the fourth child of the Rajadhyaksha couple, having two elder sisters and one brother. Mandakini was the eldest; Kunda - number two and Ashok number three. Shobha De's arrival in the Rajadhyaksha family as a fourth child and the third daughter was not a welcome arrival by her mother and grandmother. But Mr. Govind Rajadhyaksha, her father, welcomed the aesthetic looks of the newborn baby, Shobha. Her father took the birth of Shobha as a fortunate event because just two years after her birth, he was promoted as an assistant solicitor to the

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Government of India. Shobha was educated at the Delhi Nursery School, Queen Mary High School and the reputed Saint Xavier's College, at Bombay. She completed her graduation in Psychology.

When she was hardly seventeen years old, Ms. De, a collegian, was lured to modeling. As she herself has stated in her '*Selective Memory*' it was a happy accident in her life. Modeling was considered those days a disreputable career for the girls from 'good families'. She had been at a fashion show held in the ballroom of the Taj Mahal Hotel. Her father was also with her. A soft-spoken, well-bred gentleman called Shashi Banker approached her and asked her whether she would like trying modeling. She consented without a moment's hesitation and excitement. She did not bother to seek the permission of her parents, as she was not sure about their mind. But she got the opportunity. She was asked to present herself for an audition in the Madame Pompadour Salon at the Taj. The audition clashed with an inter-collegiate basketball match the same afternoon. But she preferred to an audition. Going through the process of an audition she was a kind of new experience for her and she was looking forward to, to its 'newness'. It was not the glamour or the money for her but the thrill lay in doing something she hadn't done before, the opportunity to break the monotony of the college life. Modeling presented a different challenge. It was the forbidden word of make-up for her. Because she was not good with cosmetics, she did not paint her nails and struck to nondescript clothes when she was not in sports gear - shorts and T-shirt.

Gating to the show was step number one. Breaking the news to her parents was next, far more formidable problem. She did not tell them, as they were not fashion show goers. Her disappearances were easy enough to explain, as her sports schedules were rigorous. She began to enjoy modeling that had happened to her. Her walk was changing. Her knees were cleaner. She tried not to scrape her shins during games. She applied cold cream on her elbows. Even she thought of reshaping her eyebrows. All this was a kind of fun for her and against the will of her father. The others in the show were old troopers. She was treated like the baby of the team and was teased mercilessly. The thought of performing in public on a stage paralyzed her. She watched other models, their accessories. She wondered her hair like steel sprayed pancake, caterpillar like false eyelashes weighing down eyelids, and clothes that she would never choose to wear, given the option. The whole thing was fake, unnatural and comical. But she was

a part of it.

The first walk down the brightly lit ramp was an ending journey to a destination that soon became familiar to her. Though her three entries were not spectacular, other assignments soon followed. All hell broke when her family came to know about her modeling! She had the only support of Kunda, her sister. The parents reprimanded her. But for Shobha, she was not doing anything terrible. Madame Pompadour was Mrs. Courtney's professional name. For her father it was cheap and disreputable field. Ramp modeling was something she forced herself to do since it provided an opportunity to travel. While going through this she encountered with models like Persis Khambata and Zeenat Aman. Discussing Shobha's modeling was a taboo topic in the house. Her series of press campaigns began to appear in national publications. Her face was on the cover of the two leading women's magazines: '*Femina*' and '*Eve's Weekly*'. Her father expressed strong disapproval for her pose, outfit and brief interview for '*Femina*'. The picture was shot by TOI lens man Balakrishnan; shot as staring goggle-eyed at a paper parrot, while the blurb inside quoted her saying her sole ambition in life was to get married and have lots of children (which she did have in real life). Her father wanted her to be a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer. But Shobha did not want to be anything at all. She wanted to be only a happy, carefree young person. She met Ashwin Gatha who was chief photographer at the '*Eve's Weekly*'. Shobha and Ashwin did some memorable features together. Her favorite shoot is with Ashwin, of a dramatic cover for '*Eve's Weekly*'. Ashwin was her brother's friend. She was initiated into fashion and ad photography through Ashwin at the Rajadhyaksha house.

There were not many faced for modeling that time. Shobha fit a certain classic mould - the stereotypical 'Indian' one of a time the field of modeling was dominated by modern looking Anglo-Indian and Parsi girls who wore their mini-skirts with panache. Shobha struck to sarees and salwar-kameezes, which she felt comfortable in. She did a '*Made for Each Other*' press campaign and a promotional brochure for the Taj Mahal Group of Hotels. These both were pleasant experiences for her. However, her father was displeased enormously. Shobha featured only in two ad films, which were shot by big personalities like Shyam Benegal and Zafar Hai. The Benegal film was for *Godrej* soap.

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According to Shobha, editorial shoots for magazines were complicated but very satisfying. They gave the chance to improvise and innovate. They gave the photographer and the model enough scope to experiment with lighting, make-up, hairstyles and looks. As now, then also, the main inspiration came from foreign magazines and photographic journals. So the models stole shamelessly. There was nothing original about their fashion spreads. All they did was pore over '*Vogue*', '*Elle*', '*Harper's*' and '*Queen*'.

While on the way of becoming model, Shobha De faced many strange people and strange events. She was youngest of the women chosen and had to model exquisite Banarsi Sarees. It was a kind of ego trip. One of them was a wealthy married socialite. It was an opportunity for the lady to display her splendid body. The location was Delhi and Agra. During this campaign Shobha De experienced an ugly side of the modeling business. For example, they were wine-drinking women and keeping elicited relations. One of them even went away with costly Banarsi saree, which was borrowed from the shop. She saw beauty queens with dirty toenails and ramp mannequins with only pigtails. Though she was the part of this world, she did not belong to it. She remained on its fringes, watching, laughing and learning. It was possible them to work in that artificial, almost unreal environment without losing one's perspective or a sense of humour. Other girls concentrated on becoming swans while Shobha chose to be a dawn. It was hard for her to take modeling business seriously because, she did not see herself as a sleek, sexy, soignée creature of collective fantasy. She did not possess the prerequisites for such a high visibility job, as she thought that time. She did not believe she was particularly effective on the stage. She was wracked with self-consciousness and self-doubt for anything to work, one has to believe in it, and she did not believe she was cutout for modeling even as she went from one big show to the next.

According to the Ms. De herself, the fashion shows are entertaining '*tamashas*' now and were even then. Textile mills were the cheap sponsors to project an image. The organizers were as amateurish as the models walking the ramp on heels too high, hair too stiff, lipstick too tale. There was not satellite TV to get cue from. Only old '*Vogue*' magazines were there to take cue. Given the Indian enthusiasm for improvisation they added a little song here, a small dance there, with bits of ballet '*bharatnatyam*' and '*bhangra*'. The girls, who could shake a leg but suffered from a serious lack of looks, were given these choreographed items to perform between sequences.

Up to this time Shobha De had established a good rapport with people like Ashwin Gatha and Maharashtrian photographer R. R. Prabhu. Now she started to feel herself the part of the overall process. And she also got drawn into the technical aspects of the assignment - the lighting, make-ups, props and approach. Jehangir Gazdar and Wilas Bhende were legends in this field. They shot some of her best campaigns. Another name can be added, who came later, that of D. L. Oberoi. They were thorough professionals. For Shobha, these men were with exceptionally high standards. They treated models like ladies, not commodities. This modest level of involvement took away the monotony from essentially, boring, repetitive, mechanical profession of modeling. Girls may have come a long way in other areas, but when it comes to modeling, the basic prejudices remain the same. Shobha did not respect the business of modeling though she enjoyed its fruits. She did not care for the so-called 'fame' it brought to her. She suspected its authenticity. Had she taken any of that literally, she might have been leading a completely different life.

Shobha De ultimately did not remain in the business of modeling. She accepted the career as journalist, columnist and now she is happy with her novel writing, her children, husband and the well-maintained farmhouse far away from the noisy Mumbai life. Whenever Shobha De is asked about her evergreen beauty, her pat answer is - 'maintenance'. If she is asked about her modeling choice, pat comes answer, "I didn't choose modeling, it chose me!" The fact is that modeling did not give her a high. But it did give her a certain level of self-awareness, which has been of a great help in later years. When she turned fifty, women, particularly, have started treating her the eighth wonder of the world - a rare museum piece. The secret of her beauty and health, she tells, "basic exercises to tone up muscles and a skin-care programme that includes scrupulous cleaning." Again she adds, "by breathing in, and then breathing out at regular intervals." Often she is asked such questions when she is invited as a chief guest at 'Beauty Contests' or 'Women's Meets'. Thus, the artist Shobha De (as model, journalist, columnist and fictionist) got made.

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Artifice

G. C. Mago*

I may not love my wife
But if I humour her a bit
To keep her in good humour
What is bad about it?

I may not like my friend
But if I praise him a bit
To keep the friendship alive
What is bad about it?

I may not respect my boss
But if I flatter him a bit
To sustain my job
What is bad about it?

I may not believe in God
But if I worship him a bit
To keep the evils at bay
What is bad about it?

I may not adore my 'self'
For I have dwarfed him a bit
To get on with the world
What is bad about it?

(His books of poem, Thorny Petals and the Unsung Goddess have been widely appreciated.)

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Dalit Life and the Punjabi Society

*Parmjeet Kaur Sidhu**

As compared to others the structure of the Indian society is more complex. It is due to the overwhelming presence of the caste system in the Indian society. India is a caste determined society and the nature of the caste is hereditary. Everybody in this society is bound to one or the other caste by birth, and remains so till death. It has raised socio cultural problem of the dalits for the Indian society that is different from such problems all over the world. The contentious issue is whether dalit is an economic or a social category. Some people consider the sudras in the traditional Indian caste system as dalits while the others include all the economically weaker sections of the society into it irrespective of the social status of their caste. Some treat even women as dalits taking their slave like existence into consideration. In fact, anybody experiencing suppression in social or economic terms may be treated as a dalit. A proper understanding of the caste system based on four varnas that has resulted in the suppression of a large section of our society is required to understand the position of the dalits in our society.

The caste system based on varnas in India did not emerge all of a sudden. Instead it developed from the initial division based on professions that took the form of the division of labour and ultimately got associated with one's birth. The birth of the caste system is traced to the Purus Sukta Shaloka in the Rig Veda. According to this couplet the four castes originated from the different parts of Brahma, the Creator: the Brahmins from the mouth, the Kshatriyas from the arms, the Vaishas from the thighs and the Sudras from the feet. Later on this system was explained in the manu Samriti in which caste was related to one's birth and the division of work was done on this basis. Mohan Lal Sharma explains "The Almighty Brahma ordained different tasks for the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishas and Shudras respectively born out of his mouth, arms, thighs and feet. To receive and give education, perform and organize yajnas, give and receive donations, were said to be the tasks of a Brahmins. To protect the people, donate money, get education and not to get involved in worldly pleasures were, in brief, fixed to be the functions of the Kshatriyas. To look after the cattle, donate money, perform yajnas, to get education, do business, pay interest and cultivate the land were the jobs assigned to the vaishas. For the Sudras, he fixed

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the job of serving the three varnas without criticizing anyone"¹.

A number of reasons are given for the origin of caste system. Narpinder Kumar Dutt considers the struggle between the white Aryans and the Black non- Aryans as the reason of the emergence of caste system. This struggle passed through the caste system and acquired the authority of the religion. The significant issue here is whether the model for the caste system adopted by the Aryans existed before them or they had brought it with them. The modern social set up in the region where the origin of the Aryans is traced has no signs of the caste system rather they can be seen only in the Indian part of the subcontinent. As the Aryans adopted many of the pre Aryan customs, it is quite possible that the Aryans adopted caste system from the model that already existed there. According to Bhagwati Sharan Upadhyaya, "The Aryans avoided the external forms of this civilization like architecture and art, but they could not avoid its subtle, mysterious and abstract impacts. They adopted the elements of the new civilization and later on, under some unknown sense of superiority claimed them to be their own."³ This sense of being superior is still an overwhelming aspect of our present thinking.

In the Indian society, the varana system passed through different stages before getting transformed into the caste system. It sprouts from the Vedic scriptures, grows during the Manu Samriti and gets transformed into a strict and inhuman kind of caste system based on heredity. Its roots spread throughout India. The Aryans sought the help of the Vedic Scriptures to make the people believe in this system. In the first Vedic scripture the Rig Veda, nothing has been mentioned about the four varnas, instead an emphasis is laid on the difference between colour, speech habits, religious practices of the Aryans and the non Aryan slaves. Although the modern caste system did not exist at that time, but the people were categorized on the basis of their professions. This professional categorization became the basis of their castes.

During 1000 B.C. to 600B.C. the writers of the Upanishadas supported the prevailing caste system which resulted in its gaining further strength. During this period The glimpses of life during 600B .C. to 300 B.C. are found in Religious Sutras, Domestic sutras and Panini's grammar. During this period the livelihood of the sudras depended in serving the three upper castes. In these writings, it was for the first time that the sudra were asked to eat the leftovers and wear discarded clothes. According to Gautam, "Sudras must be a servant .He should wear the clothes and the shoes discarded by the

upper castes.”⁴ During this time, the Sudras became the victims of social, religious economic and mental slavery. The slavery of the mind proved fatal for them as it did not allow them to raise their voice against the injustice done to them.

The scriptures that strengthened the caste system during 200B.C. to 200 A.D. were in the form of Samritis. Manu Samriti is the most important of them all. The norms of the Indian caste system were established for the first time in this Samriti. The period in which Manusmriti becomes the basis of socio-political norms is unique in Indian history. The doors of political and judicial institutions were closed for the sudras. Strict laws were framed to award punishment for indulging in any activity or speech against the upper castes, particularly the brahmins. The concept of untouchability emerges with greater vigour during this time. In this system, not only the upper castes were wary of being defiled by a touch of the untouchable even the low castes themselves were quite conscious about this. This system continued its hold in the same form in the Punjab also. In India, it is in the 12th century that Punjab moves towards a separate geographical identity. The elements of this separate identity were opposed to the Brahminic society.

A deeper probe in this reveals that this opposition remains at the theoretical level and the position of the dalits practically remains the same. The Bhagati Movement in its initial stage challenges the brahminic civilization but ultimately, it gets lost in the Brahminic circle of karma, salvation and rebirth. Considering their present social condition as a result of their past karmas, the dalit poets in the Bhagati Movement emphasized devotion or bhagati to improve their next birth. According to Sewa Singh, “The service of the upper castes became the ordained religion of the Sudras. Therefore, the condition of the sudras started moving around Bhagati and karma”⁵. No real change took place in the condition of the dalits in society and they remained untouchables in this movement also. The houses of the dalits were constructed at the outskirts or the southern sides of the villages in Punjab as the Brahminic thoughts made people think that even the air coming from the houses of the dalits was polluted and impure. Even their professions do not witness any change during this movement.

In Punjabi social set up, a major change is noticed at the cultural and philosophical level at the arrival of the Sikh Movement. Guru Nanak Dev Ji introduced the concept of one God in the religious philosophy and adopts humanistic approach towards the dalits. Guru

Naank Dev ji, Professes moving together with the untouchables, and Guru Gobind Singh Ji calls them the sons of the Guru, but for all practical purposes the condition of the dalits remains unchanged during this movement also. When this movement acquires institutionalized form the condition of the dalits remains almost the same as they fail to assimilate into the upper castes in the extended form of religion. Neither the formal structure of the villages changes nor do the dalits become a part of the mainstream society. In the same way, in the Arya Samaj movement, they are addressed as ‘Mahashas’, to provide a sense of honour to them, but they are not allowed to enter the mainstream society. In the Sikh Movement, they just remain the Sikhs of the fourth category. The society of the twice born does not allow them to enter the mainstream in any form. During the struggle for independence the Adhi Dharam Mandal, started a campaign against casteism and to have their share in political power. This movement succeeded in getting political strength to some extent, but it failed to change the social system to some meaningful extent.

During the freedom struggle the issue of dalit thought started emerging at the theoretical level. This movement succeeded in having an impact on the dalits of the middle classes. In the lower sections of society it remained limited to specific issues. The dalit society as a whole remained unaffected. As the aura of brahminic thought was all pervasive, this movement brought only awareness among the downtrodden without causing any wide spread changes in the social system as a whole. Even within the dalit society, there exist divisions on the basis of upper and lower castes. Thus no substantial change occurred in the social set up during the freedom struggle despite and awareness among the dalits about their suppression. At the time of the division of the states on linguistic basis after independence, different movements started in Punjab. The dalit society remained almost unaffected and the communal nature that this movement acquired resulted in violent protests. The life of the dalits was influenced to some extent after Independence due to the right to reservation granted to the dalits in the Indian constitution. There were wide spread changes in political, economic and social sphere in the Punjab. These changes had immense impact on the dalit society. In the political sphere, the vote bank politics make the dalits realize their power. Due to the introduction of the dalits into the administrative system, the dalits started emerging as a political power. The changes in the field of

education brought an awakening among the dalits that enabled them to exercise their influence in the field of administration and politics.

After independence, the socio- economic changes in cities and villages also had an impact on the Punjabi society . The traditional landless contractual laborer in the agricultural village economy now turned into farm worker and then became a daily wage earner. This change took place after the green Revolution. A discernible change occurred in the thinking of the workers who went to the city to work in the industries. The gradual increase in the number of industrial workers intensified awareness among the dalits. One section of the dalits joined government and private sector jobs. On the other hand the process of urbanization also loosened the grip of caste system to some extent. Unsociability disappeared to a large extent in the field of education, government and private sector institutions and the public places. Some social changes were also witnessed during these times. Inter-caste marriages got encouragement, thought to a limited extent. Wherever the social system creates hurdles in these marriages, the legal system supports them.

The changes in the economic and political spheres have had a limited impact on the social system. People have neither accepted nor adopted these changes at the mental level . On the other hand, the social division has become more pronounced in the political sphere. The caste based census is one aspect of this tendency. The Indian and the Punjabi society as a whole hesitate in assimilating the dalit society in to it. Another development that can be witnessed is that due to reservation a sections among the dalits has emerged that has separated itself from the lower sections among the dalits . These people have the tendency to hide their caste so they have adopted the sub castes of the upper castes in society. It exposes the story of the dalits who are ready to use the lower sections among the dalit society for political motives, yet like the upper castes consider themselves superior and keep the other dalits at a distance. Thus the lower sections of the dalit society have been marginalized in yet another form.

A different thought about the social system has emerged among the newly developed section of the dalit society. According to them, social issues have greater importance than the economic. The contemporary dalit intellectuals using Ambedkar's thoughts on this issue have started propagating the idea of social crisis, independent of the leftist thought. According to this view, human behaviour is determined not only by economic system but by social system also. One issue of

this sociological thought is related to the religious identity. Under this process the Punjabi dalit is moving to develop a separate religious identity. It is perhaps due to the dalit society not getting any recognition in the traditional Indian religions that now it has started developing its own religious scriptures also. The attempts in this direction had started even during the Adh Dharam Movement. Dr. Raunaki Ram has mentioned in his paper, "Guru Ravidas Adi Dharam and Dalit Consciousness" that the Adi Dharmis developed their separate scripture 'Adi Parkash' religious symbol Sohun' that was later changed to 'Hari', and the forms of emotional greetings 'Jai Guru Dev' and in their response the words 'Dhan Guru Dev' was spoken. He also tells about the religious slogan 'Bole so nirbhay, Sri Guru Ravi Das Maharaj Ji di Jai' and other symbols established for separate identity 6. Those sections of the dalit society who have developed their own identity in political and economic spheres of life tend to move towards this direction. It has developed new contradictions in the Punjabi society. Political motives may be behind all these developments yet they relate to some significant issues concerning dalit society, therefore, the movements related to religious issues turned violent at some places. All these developments seem to be the result of the polarization in that is taking place in the social, economic, religious and political life of the Punjabi society.

Caste system is a complex process of the Indian society. It has been an inseparable part of the Indian culture since ages. The sudra varna has been the worst victim of this system. This varna reached the stage of untouchability after passing through the process of caste division. The sanction of the religious scriptures brought it to a painful situation. A voice of protest has always been there against this system but there has been negligible change in the real situation. In the era of democracy, some changes have, no doubt, taken place yet it still persists in the mentality of the people. Therefore, conscious efforts are required in this direction to eradicate this practice from the society.

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A Deconstructive Reading of U. R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*

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Ankita Sharma*

In “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”, Derrida is concerned about the ‘decentring’ of the intellectual universe. He talks about the “rupture” (Derrida, 195), a radical break from the past ways of thoughts. Prior to this event the existence of centre was taken for granted. Infact, the Enlightenment and Renaissance put man and the Reason at the centre. ‘Centre’ meant firmness and stability. But in the twentieth century, these centres were questioned and finally eroded. First World War and the Holocaust destroyed the illusion of Europe as the centre and source of human civilization. Also the notion of relativity destroyed the ideas of time and space as fixed and central absolutes. Derrida’s decentred approach is basically against ‘metaphysics of presence’. The framework of the history of metaphysics, Derrida writes, “is the determination of being as ‘presence’ in all the senses of this word. It would be possible to show that all the terms related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated the constant of a presence- ‘eidos’, ‘arche’, ‘telos’, ‘energeia’, ‘ouisa’, ‘ aletheia’, transcendentality, consciousness or conscience, God, man and so forth.”(Culler, 85)

The following examples will help to elucidate what is involved in the ‘metaphysics of presence’. In the Cartesian ‘Cogito’, ‘I think, therefore I am’, the I is deemed to be ‘present’ beyond doubt because it is present to itself in the act of thinking or else, the familiar notion that the present instant is what ‘exists’. A third instance would be the notion of meaning as something present to the consciousness of the speaker; meaning that is expressed by the speaker or author through signs or signals which is present in his consciousness at a crucial moment.(Culler, 85)

Derrida is aware of the fact that we are “prisoners of our perspective”(Powell, 14) and so he pays attention to the subversive practice of reversing one’s perspective. So Derrida subverts the ‘logocentricism’ of Western metaphysics which is grounded on a ‘logos’ i.e Word, rationality or presence. By logos or presence, Derrida

signifies what he calls an “ultimate referent” - a self – certifying and self- sufficient ground or foundation available to us totally outside the play of language itself that is directly present to our awareness and serves to “center” (that is, to anchor, organize and guarantee) the structure of the linguistic system and as a result to fix the bounds, coherence and determinate meanings of any spoken or written utterance within that system.(Abrams, 56) According to Derrida, all implicit reliance on such a ground is bound to fail as one always says more and other than one intends to say.

According to Barthes also, “literature (or writing) by refusing to assign a ‘secret’, an ultimate meaning to the text liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is in the end to refuse God and his hypostases-reason, science and law”.(Barthes, 188) There are many texts which yield themselves to deconstructive reading. No doubt, applying a theory to a text is like forcing a text into Procrustean bed. Nonetheless, some texts correspond so well to the theory that one gets the impression of the text being written in keeping with the theory. *Samskara* is one such text in which echoes of deconstruction are so conspicuous.

In brief, the novel deals with the dilemma of performing the last rites of Naranappa, a renegade Brahmin who broke every known taboo, drank liquor, ate flesh and lived with a low caste woman. He had cast off his lawfully wedded Brahmin wife. In trying to resolve the dilemma of who, if any, should perform the heretic’s death rite (Samskara), the Acharya begins a (Samskara) transformation for himself. Other Brahmins turn for answer to Praneshacharya. But ironically, the Acharya becomes akin to his opposite and sleeps with Chandri, Naranappa’s lowborn concubine.(Ramanujan, 139-40) The shell of custom and the age old Brahmanical armour breaks and he can no longer fit into a coded and stratified existence. But after casting away this role, no safe niche is there for him to occupy. By the end of the novel, he is a lonely man unsupported by the community or God and he is unable to chalk out his own path. Outside his professional framework, he becomes an anonymous, casteless wanderer.

In life as in death, Naranappa questions and exposes the Brahmins’ Samskara (refinement of spirit) or lack of it. Naranappa could not be excommunicated from his community by the rest of the Brahmins as

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he constitutes the shadow (Jungian archetype) of those Brahmins. He was their mocking anti-self and he knew it. But after his death the question arises, “Was he a Brahmin enough in life to be treated as one in death?” Did he have the necessary ‘preparation’ (Samskara) to deserve a proper ‘ceremony’ (Samskara)?” “Once a Brahmin, always a Brahmin?” Likewise, after sleeping with Chandri, Praneshacharya’s Brahmanism or preparation (Samskara) is put to test. So far his Samskara consisted of Sanskrit learning and ascetic practice. He had turned even marriage into a penance by marrying an invalid. But his sudden sexual adventure with Chandri becomes a rite de passage. So the question, ‘who is Brahmin, how is he made?’ finally turns even against this invincible Brahmin of Brahmins, Brahmin by birth as by Samskara. (Ramanujan, 140)

Many scholars see this novel in the light of rendition of a social problem realistically. *Samskara* had evoked controversy right after its publication in 1965. It was accused of attacking Brahminism. (Mukherjee, 166) No doubt U.R. Anantha Murthy is critical of decadent agraharas of South India. The writer explodes the superiority myth of Brahminism and deconstructs it. Marginality is foregrounded. While Brahmins like Garudacharya, Dasacharya are shown in bad light, Dalit characters like Chandri (marginal) are shown virtuous. The hierarchy is subverted as the binary in the form of Brahmin / Dalit where the first term is superior and the second is inferior is questioned. The hypocritical veneer of Brahmins is torn asunder. Thus this novel sees something old with a new and opposite perspective. Naranappa becomes the author’s spokesperson as he deconstructs the myth of Brahmanical superiority. Naranappa also becomes the mouthpiece for the upliftment of Dalits. He subverts the age-old edifice of caste system – binary opposition – Brahmin / Dalit. He, himself though a Brahmin lives a life free of restraint. He advocates equality for all. He demands that the temple doors should be opened for the lowcaste people. He also took food cooked by his low caste concubine Chandri. He sees through the false façade of Brahmin’s so called “pure” tradition, which is not “pure” otherwise. Naranappa is a deconstructionist as he is a hedonist as well as a reformer who tries to reform the society at large by shaking the false assumptions on which the citadel of Brahmanic tradition rests. His loathing of its corrupt ways is palpable.

He tells Praneshacharya, “Your Garuda, he robs shaven widows,

he plots evil with black magic men and he is one of your Brahmins, isn’t he? Let’s see how long all this Brahmin business will last.” (Murthy, 21) The Brahmins no doubt are greedy, gluttonous, mean – spirited, they love gold, betray orphans and widows. The author condemns them highly with the help of Naranappa who is an embodiment of their unspoken libidinous desires. He is the harbinger of radical ideas. He dismantles the Brahmanic tradition saying, “Your texts and rites don’t work any more. The congress party is coming to power, you’ll have to open up the temples to all outcasts.” (Murthy, 21) Thus, the author inverts the superiority myth regarding Brahmins by reversing the binary. The attempt of the holy Brahmin (Praneshacharya) to tread the path of celibacy is nothing but hypocrisy and an exercise in futility as he yields to his sexual desires for Chandri and sleeps with her.

Anantha Murthy does not shy away from accepting that he criticises Brahmins; “Hurting brahmins for me, born and brought up as a brahmin, is not an issue that I like, but is inevitable. My writings like *Samskara*, *Ghatashraddha*, *Bharatipura*, have hurt brahmins... What I have written is the essential truth that brahmins must face.” (Sonia, 143) As A.K.Ramanujan writes in Afterword of his English translation of the novel: “Certain Brahmin communities of South India were offended by the picture of decadent Brahminism. They felt that Brahmin men and women were unfairly caricatured; they were offended by the author’s rather intrusive partiality for Naranappa and the Sudra women.” (Ramanujan, 146)

On the existential plane, the novel ends up in aporia – dead lock – the protagonist is left meditating as he is unable to make a choice. So in the end, no single solution emerges for him. The author does not impose his will on the protagonist. There is no longer the sense of a primal authority attaching to the literary work. The author is sacrificed to the vagaries and whims of textual ‘dissemination’. But these moments of ‘blindness’ are often more acutely revealing than anything in the discourse of philosophy. (Norris, 24) The free play of meaning is allowed.

After leaving the hierarchical role of Brahmin, he is lost. Praneshacharya’s first impulse after leaving the village is one of freedom – freedom from duties and obligations. But till the end, the doubt remains about whether he can ever reach that core of “true” self. Praneshacharya is not able to negotiate between his past life {ascetic} and the present one {sensuous}. His inability to embrace one world

creates the dilemma. The Acharya moves through three stages- 'separation', 'transition' and 're -incorporation'-though one sees him not entirely into the third stage, but only on its threshold. The reader even does not know if the protagonist would go ahead adapting to the new view of things or retreat his steps back. No clue is provided. The text poses the question, "Will he, can he, ever integrate his new life with his old ways, his past Samskara?" The reader only sees him contemplating, changing from a fully evolved socialized Brahmin at one with his tradition towards a new kind of person; choosing himself, individuating himself and alienating himself. The reader is left expectant, anxious like the Acharya himself at the end of the novel. Thus, the novel ends without usual climax or closure.

The novel is full of binary opposites which cancel each other being in perpetual state of conflict. Binaries are in a constant process of destabilization. *Samskara* is in fact the novel of contrasts and polarities. The whole thematic interest of the novel is brought forth with the play of binaries and their difference. Binaries exist in the form of two ways of existence symbolized by Naranappa and Praneshacharya. The play between them is not resolved till end as Praneshacharya keeps on meditating, not able to choose a single path out of the two. Even the author remains quiet and leaves the text's conclusion open-ended. The author does not reach a final 'ethical' conclusion as to what should be the ideal path to be followed. Therefore, at the end of the novel the reader does not feel a sense of fulfillment.

The problem with centers, for Derrida, is that they attempt to exclude. In doing so, they ignore, repress or marginalize others. e.g. if one has a culture with Christ in the centre of its icons, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, will be in the margins. Reality and language are not as simple and singular as icons with a central and exclusive image in their middle. They are more like ambiguous figures. There is more than one way of looking at things, not any of them is final. Derrida subverts the innumerable binary oppositions which are essential structural elements in a logocentric language. Derrida shows that such oppositions form a tacit hierarchy in which the first term functions as privileged and second as derivative or inferior. He inverts the hierarchy, in fact destabilizes both hierarchies leaving them in a condition of undecidability. This defreezes the play of binaries. (Abrams, 58) Likewise in the novel, the hierarchy Brahmin / Dalit is overturned or deconstructed.

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Even the title does not signify one central meaning, thus deconstructing the centre of focus. There are labyrinths of meanings embedded in the novel and nuances of them are suggested in the significations of the title itself. The text refers A Kannada English Dictionary for varieties of meanings of the word, Sam-s-Kara – 1. Forming well or thoroughly, making perfect 2. Forming in the mind, conception, idea, notion, the power of memory, the realizing of past perceptions 3. Preparation 4-5 Making sacred, hallowing, consecration 6. Making pure 7. Any rite or ceremony 8. Funeral Obsequies 9. A sanctifying or purificatory rite. (Murthy, Foreword)

The concept of central becoming marginal and marginal coming to the center is further realized in the novel with the help of a Dalit Character, Chandri. Chandri in this novel in fact acts as marginal or supplement but after sometime she assumes the central position.

Supplement in French means:

- (i) Adding onto something which is incomplete to complete a thing (It must contain absence).
- (ii) To take the place of, to substitute for. (Powell, 51)

Praneshacharya's character has an absence that is of his instinctual starvation. He is sexually starved. Chandri 'completes' or supplements his incomplete self by giving him sexual pleasure which he 'lacks'. She substitutes the barren wife of Praneshacharya and takes her place.

Supplement is marginal. Derrida's enterprise is to bring it to the center.

Central	Marginal
Melody	Harmony
Speech	Writing
Nature	Civilization
Sex	Fantasy

Chandri acts as a supplement in Praneshacharya's life. Supplements are at margins. At one point of time, Brahmin wives are central. But later, marginal becomes central. Chandri becomes the focus of attention in Praneshacharya's life and in the novel as well. Reversal of hierarchy takes place. She supplements or completes Praneshacharya's incomplete personality and he acquires fullness of

being / experience / consciousness. He starts acknowledging the horror of ugliness of Bhagirathi. Chandri is equated with apsaras like Urvashi, Maneka which means that she is not of real earth but is someone celestial, a fantasy of some sort fulfilling the sexual lack in the barren life of Praneshacharya.

All the above instances where the 'center' is negated and the 'marginalities' are brought to the forefront stand as justifications of Derrida's view preferring writing over speech. Derrida sees a whole metaphysics at work behind the privilege granted to speech in Saussure's methodology. Voice becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity, a source of self-present 'living' speech. In speaking one is able to experience an intimate link between sound and sense, an inward and immediate realization of meaning. Writing, on the other hand, destroys this ideal of pure self-presence. It follows an alien, depersonalized medium, a deceiving shadow which falls between intent and meaning, between utterance and understanding. The author is sacrificed to the vagaries of textual 'dissemination', while writing a text. Writing, in short, is a threat to the deeply traditional view that associates truth with self-presence and the 'natural' language wherein it finds expression. (Norris, 28)

But this should not give impression that deconstruction is destruction. Deconstruction is not synonymous with destruction. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signification over another. (Abrams, 60) The aspect of deconstructive practice that is best known in the U.S.A according to Gayatri Spivak is its tendency towards infinite regression. But Barbara Johnson puts it, "The sentence, 'all readings are misreadings', does not simply deny the notion of truth. Truth is preserved in vestigial form in the notion of error. This does not mean that there is, somewhere out there, forever unattainable, the one true reading against which all others will be tried and found wanting. Rather, it implies that the reasons a reading might consider itself right are motivated and undercut by its own interests, blindness, desires and fatigue and that the role of truth cannot be so easily eliminated. (Culler, 1985:178)

Therefore, a text is not an abyss alone, but embodies a core of

"Truth" which marks the point from which emanates the various alternate "Truths".

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PRAGATI EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL

H.O. Jalandhar City

(Registered at Chandigarh in 1988 under the act XXI 1860)

Pragati's English Journal is a house-journal of the Pragati Educational Council. It is published in June and December every year.

Editor : Dr. N. K. Neb

Editorial Advisory Board : Dr. Gurupadesh Singh
: Dr. Kulbhushan Kushal

Pragati's English Journal is published by **Pragati Educational Council** in Collaboration with Dayanand Institute of Education Management and Research (D.I.E.M.R.) Panvel, New Mumbai, Maharashtra.

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