



Department of English
University of Kashmir

ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

A REFEREED JOURNAL OF ENGLISH
LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES

ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA



Department of English
University of Kashmir



ISSN 0975-6575

English Studies in India

A Refereed Journal of English Literature and Language

Vol.23

January 2015

Chief Editor

Professor Hamida Bano

Editors

Dr Nusrat Jan

Dr Iffat Maqbool

Dr Mufti Mudasir

Department of English

University of Kashmir

Srinagar

Advisory Board

- Professor G R Malik, Former Head, Dept of English, Kashmir University, Srinagar
- Professor Nishat Zaidi, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
- Professor Badri Raina, former Professor of English, University of Delhi
- Professor Hamid Khan, Department of English, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad
- Professor Imtiyaz Hasnain, Department of Linguistics AMU, Aligarh
- Professor Malashri Lal, Joint Director, South Campus, University of Delhi, Delhi
- Professor M. L. Raina, former Professor of English, Punjab University, Chandigarh
- Professor Nilufer Barucha, Department of English, University of Mumbai
- Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, University of Bombay

Department of English Jan 2015

Published by

Professor Hamida Bano

Head

Department of English

University of Kashmir

Srinagar 190006

English Studies in India is a refereed journal of literature and language published annually by the Department of English, University of Kashmir.

Contributions are welcome which should be addressed to the Head, Department of English, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 190006, Kashmir (India). Manuscripts submitted should be sent in duplicate, typeset in Microsoft Office XP or in the 'Compatibility mode' in office 2007. They can also be emailed at: hameedah.nayeem@gmail.com. However hard copies should be sent by post for proof-reading.

Only research articles are accepted for publication. Unused manuscripts can be returned to the authors if accompanied by stamped and self-addressed envelopes.

The editors or the department are not responsible for any plagiarism, if at all, resorted to by any contributor. A contributor must furnish to the editor a certificate that the article has not been published anywhere else. Views expressed in the articles are of their respective writers and not of the department.

We do not accept hand written articles or articles that do not follow the recommended style.

Subscription rate: Rs 200.00 per annum / issue

Note to Contributors

Articles sent to English Studies in India must follow the style and format given below. Notes should be worked into the text if they help clarify, otherwise just omit them. Use intra-text citations with all references consolidated into final alphabetized section. The proper style/format for citations is as follows:

Non-paginated

(Author[s] Year) - No comma between author (s) and date. E.g. (Derrida 1985) Or (Wimsatt and Brooks 1999)

(Author[s]Year 1, Year 2, etc) - Comma between dates of successive publications by same author (s). E.g. (Chomsky 1960, 1974) or (Rao 1979a, 1979b)

(Author[s]-1 Year, Author[s]-2 Year) - Semi colon between different authors or sets of authors. E.g. (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950; Rajan 1964)

Paginated

(Author[s] Year: Pages) -Use of colon with no preceding or succeeding or sets between. ? Years and pages. E.g. (Derrida 1985:10-12)

The rules apply to multiple works by the same author(s) or multiple sets of authors. For citation from author(s) just previously cited, (author: page no).

Examples of References

Ayer, A.J. Language, Truth and Logic. Penguin: Hammondsworth, 1997. Print

Giles, H. Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations. London: Academic Press, 1997.

Killam, G.D. The Writings of Chinua Achebe, Rev. ed. London: Heinemann, 1977. Print.

Soyinka, Wole. "The Writer in a Modern State". The Writer in Modern Africa, ed. Peter Wastberg. NY: African Publishing Corporation, 1967. Print.

Contents

Articles

Many of these papers were presented in the seminar on: Literature and the Sacred: Issues, Legacies and the Path Ahead

Dedicated to Agha Shahid Ali

Literature and the Sacred: Issues, Legacies and the Path Ahead

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| Introductory Speech Professor Hamida Bano, Head Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 01 - 06 |
| Literature and the Sacred: Keynote Address Professor G. R. Malik, former Head Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 07 - 13 |
| Random Reflections on Literature and the Sacred Professor M. L. Raina, former Professor of English, Punjab University, Chandigarh | 14 - 21 |
| Patterns and the Pattern Late Keshav Malik, Art Critic | 22 - 30 |
| Between the Sacred and the Disembodied: The Consciousness of the Moderns Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Honary Director, Center for Advanced Studies in India (CASII), Bhub | 31 - 47 |
| Negotiating the Sacred: Post-secular Configurations of Faith in Cosmopolitan, Transnational Spaces in the Poetry of Agha Shahid Ali Professor Nishat Zaidi, Dept of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi | 48 - 55 |
| Order and Authenticity: Directions of the Sacred in Literature Professor Hameed Khan, Dept of English, Aurangabad University, Maharashtra | 56 - 60 |
| On the Wings of Fire: The Ethno-religious Strand in Contemporary Parsi Literature Professor Nihar E. Bhuraxia, Dept of English, University of Mumbai, Maharashtra | 61 - 71 |
| Problematizing the Sacred, the Profane and the Literary Mohammad Asim Siddiqui, Dept of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh | 72 - 77 |
| Towards Developing a Sacred Centric Critique of Curriculum in English: Clues from A. K. Coomaraswamy Muhammad Maroof Shah, Scholar and Critic | 78-103 |
| Transgressive Bodies, Subversive Sacred: Feminist Resistance in Mahashweta Devi's <i>Draupadi and the Breast-Giver</i> . Dr. Paromita Chakrabarti, Assistant Professor, Dept of English H.R. College, University of Mumbai | 104 - 110 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 'Sacred Freedoms' in Contemporary American Fables: An Examination of the Conditions for the Revival of the Great American Novel Saikat Ghosh, SGTB Khalsa College, Delhi University | 111 - 120 |
| The Militant Poet: Meena Kandasamy's Poetry of Protest Dr. Iffat Maqbool, Assistant Professor Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 121 - 127 |
| Kashmiri Ethnicity at Work: Short Stories of Akhter Mohiuddin and Amin Kamil Abid Ahmad, PhD Scholar Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 128 - 135 |
| Trauma Theory and Literary Representation Maimul Hasan Chowdhury, Associate Professor University of Chittagong (and) Khan Touseef Osman, PhD Research Scholar UNESCO - Madanjeet Singh Institute of Kashmir Studies University of Kashmir | 136 - 142 |
| The Changing Stereotypes of Kashmiri Language Among School Children of Srinagar Nayer Rizwana, Associate Professor Dept of English, Islamia College, Srinagar | 143 - 151 |
| Relying on Sacred Foundations in Countering White Hegemony: A Study of Leslie Marmon Silko's "Storyteller" and "Tony's Story" Mohd Mohsin, Research Scholar, Aligarh Muslim University | 152 - 160 |
| Depiction of Violence in the Counter-Hegemonic Discourses of Basharat Peer, Mirza Waheed and Shahnaz Bashir Mudasir Aliaf Bhat, PhD Research Scholar (and) Supervisor (Corresponding Author) Dr. Rabinder Powar Professor, Dept of English Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab | 161 - 168 |
| Caribbean Consciousness and Diasporic Dilemma: A Study of George Lamming's <i>The Emigrants</i> Deeba Shireen, Research Scholar, Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 169 - 173 |
| The Bacchae of Euripides: Revision of an Ancient Myth Junaid Shahir, PhD Scholar, Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 174 - 181 |
| Contesting the Hegemony: A Study of Shahnaz Bashir's <i>The Half Mother</i> Basharat Shameem Research Scholar, Dept of English, Jamia Millia University, New Delhi | 182 - 188 |
| Translations | |
| Rehman Rahi <i>Life</i> Translated from Kashmiri by Hamida Bano | 189 - 190 |
| Ahad Zargar <i>The Plunder</i> Translated from Kashmiri by Majrooh Rashid | 191 |
| Zareef Ahmad Zareef <i>Who Could Count?</i> Translated from Kashmiri by Majrooh Rashid | 192 |
| Samina Ashraf <i>Bear Dance</i> Translated from Kashmiri by Tasleem Ahmad War Assistant Professor, Dept of English | 193 - 194 |

Poems

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Majrooh Rashid Professor, Dept of Kashmiri, University of Kashmir | 195 - 196 |
| Abid Ahmad Research Scholar, Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 197 - 198 |
| Raqeeb Ahmad Lone Research Scholar, Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 199 - 200 |

Book Reviews

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History by Jay Winter. Profesaor M.L.Raina, former Professor of English, Punjab University, Chandigarh | 201 - 204 |
| Phaswane Mpe, Welcome to Hillbrow Tej Nath Dhar, former Professor, Dept of English, University of Kashmir | 205 - 206 |

Articles

Introductory Speech

Prof Hamida Bano

The question about the meaning of life, even though dismissed with disdain by some positivists and postmodernists, remains one of the most pertinent and challenging questions man has ever asked and continues to ask. All great literature from Homer onwards is preoccupied with this question, a feature it shares with philosophy and religion. Even the modern literary masters have been seriously concerned with this question and in their literary output they have tried to come to terms with the despairing answer suggested by contemporary science and philosophy.

Notwithstanding the dominant philosophical trend produced by the post-Enlightenment thought which seeks to gloss over the questions pertaining to the ultimate meaning, these questions pose themselves today as vigorously as ever. The failure of the philosophical and critical attempts to provide a satisfactory resolution to the issue of nihilism mirrored with acute poignancy in (post)/modern literature and art, constitutes an important dimension for artists and critics.

The idea of the sacred posed in this context gains greater urgency as prophesied by Nietzsche himself and acknowledged in many important contemporary works. The exploration of resources from non-Western traditions and pre-modern West has gained wider currency today and attracted attention of litterateurs from across the world.

The failure or the pathologies of the process of secularization and equally pathological fundamentalist versions or appropriations of the Sacred, that have affected the psychological and spiritual health of the world, calls for sustained engagement with so far largely un-theorized or unexplored question in major schools of criticism.

The cataclysmic changes which have taken us across some essential divide in the matter of reality between the 19th and 20th century and the essential evolution of consciousness from modernism to post modernism to new post modernism have made literature into what it is today. However, the experience of sacred as "an element in the structure of consciousness rather than a stage in the history of consciousness has been central to the history of culture and its reservoir in the form of literature". Through experience of the sacred, the human mind has perceived, as Mercea Elaide has noted, the difference between what reveals itself as being real, powerful, rich, and meaningful and what lacks these qualities, that is, chaotic and dangerous flux of things, their fortuitous appearances and disappearances.

If today's literature lacks all the qualities of pre modern times, it can be attributed to the desacralized worldview that informs it. The major attempts to overcome nihilistic vision do not seem to have worked as is evidenced by the painful tone of modern literature, that is

largely an extended elegy on the death of God and the loss of faith in human relationships. Eclipse of the sacred has implied cynicism regarding human beings' destiny and ability to conquer pain. In this wasteland of spirit, it is 'fragmentation of consciousness and identity and unsatisfactory consolations for the horror of existence at all levels – individual, existential and social that abound'.

The disruption was first diagnosed by Arnold when he suggested the replacement of religion by art as a portal of the sacred in a secular set-up. Afterwards T S Eliot pointed out the dissociated sensibility- a radical disconnect between thinking and feeling, mind and heart and his solution lied in privileging the metaphysical poetry and the concept of tradition as a continuum from earlier times. Then Yeats' tortuous cry of 'things fall apart/ centre cannot hold' to William Carlos Williams' diagnosis of divorce in modern age of all things that ought to hold together by a vital language and art. In these diagnoses, we have a whole picture of what has happened to the idea of Sacred in literature and all the efforts to replace traditional idea of sacred by one or the other set of personal beliefs has not proved adequate. Since Sacred is not a stage in the evolution of consciousness but an element in the structure of consciousness, it cannot be bulldozed away by the onslaughts of modernism. Major western writers have braced the eclipse of the sacred and their explorations question the episteme of the secular outlook. Literature as an opening to the sacred, pointing the way to ' fugitive gods', has provided a critique of alienating and dehumanizing currents of modern culture while at the same time, its claim to provide access to the sacred has been largely discredited.

However, very little attention has been paid to reviewing or theorizing the place of sacred in contemporary literature and the larger question of reorienting criticism in the light of certain new powerful voices calling for revisiting the tradition in the postmodern world with its aggressive posturing against transcendence/sacred. Traditionalists have linked violence of secularization of culture and the eclipse of the sacred to ' rationalization of certain economic and political order that expresses class interests rather than real discovery of modern thought.'

They have pointed out that the ideas the proponents of salvation through art seem to invoke, are dependent upon certain notion of transcendence that they otherwise seem to edge out. The seminar is an attempt to understand the violence of cultural modernity as expressed in major literary works and to review or theorize the place of sacred in contemporary literature.

Dedication to Agha Shahid Ali

We dedicate this seminar to the loving memory of Agha Shahid Ali who singularly put Kashmir on the international map of English poetry. He enthralled thousands with his mesmerizing poetry in America, Europe, in Kashmir and had a special relationship with our department. His death in the prime of his life left an indelible scar and a vacuum in our hearts

and minds. While he has been globally acknowledged, he is not even remembered in his cherished homeland he eternalized in his poetry which has become a very favorite subject with researchers and scholars all over the globe including Indian universities. The department dedicates this seminar to him as he was in continuous search of the sacred in his poetic journey after having being influenced by the western modernism in his early poetry.

One of the most distinguishing feature of his poetry, which he has published in several collections, including *In Memory of Begum Akhter*, *Half-inch Himalyas*, *A Walk Through Yellow Pages*, *The Country Without Post Office*, *Rooms are Never Finished* and *Call Me Ishmael Tonight* (besides thematizing the sense of loss and longing), is its dramatization of a multicultural consciousness with which he naturally grew, the simultaneous co-existence of different cultures, geographical locations, poetic forms and sensibilities brought together by a metaphysical unbounded imagination. These different strands do not appear as unrelated to each other but are forged into a staggering mosaic of unitary sign of human culture. In the merger of eastern and western poetic traditions without making one subservient to the other, Shahid has created a new poetic idiom, a unique kind of poetry, giving it an ambidexterity of identity. Despite discursive heterogeneity and disparate allusions, images and symbols (derived from different cultures), there is a controlling consciousness which returns to a vibrant centre, his motherland and a sacred Urdu tradition, for emotional sustenance, cultural capital and of course subject matter time and again. The celebration of difference and a controlled discourse is made possible by his rich sensibility and his continued search for the sacred in his later poetry.

Outgrowing his early influences of Shelley and T S Eliot yet keeping intact a collision between a romantic temperament and a modernist mood, he is constantly in search of his own distinct poetic voice, which he gradually establishes with his encounter with and immersion in the Urdu poetic tradition spearheaded by Mirza Ghalib, Mir Taqui Mir and Faiz Ahmad Faiz whose ghazals circulated like life-blood through the performances of Begum Akhter. Ghalib's poetry, surfacing at a time when a whole civilization seemed to be breaking up and nothing of equal strength replacing it, possessed moral grandeur. It was also characterised by intense moral loneliness, a longing for relations which were no longer possible and a sense of utter waste. (Lawrence Needham 1992, Reworking). Ghalib then as much as T S Eliot, is an inspiration for Shahid's early poems of desolation, the English tradition recedes farther behind as the poet cracks his tongue on Urdu language. There is the barest hint that Ghalib offered him a refuge from the ravages of time and historical change. Even a master of poetry saw, 'poetry dissolve into letters of blood/ when history broke the back of poetry (Partition poem). Faiz, on the other hand, the poet who redefined the cruel beloved as revolution, stands inside history ' as always witness to rain of stones' (Homage to Faiz Ahmad Faiz). From him Shahid increasingly assumes the role of witness, the literal meaning of his name, and in Faiz perhaps he discovers a model for employing a tradition in startling and original ways. (In Memory of Begum Akhter) Unmasked, he establishes a poetic identity and in confronting the power of time and the force of history, he discovers a poetic

vocation to memorialize but faced with the prospect of losing it he finds he carries a voice attuned to loss unable to sustain the moment of memory.

Like his predecessors of modern literature, (Conrad, Joyce, Eliot, Lawrence, Pound and Yeats, he is possessed by 'the time obsession of 20th century' but struggles to transcend the paralyzing influences of this dilemma. If his view of human history and culture emerges to be different from theirs', it is because despite western education and crossings and re-crossings, he has carried within him the vibrant Urdu poetic tradition that has not suffered the pangs of breakdown of faith in the Sacred and consequent sense of failed connections and moribund language.

He infuses his later poetry with the rhythmic recurrent refrains from Ghalib and Faiz in varying transcreations, which weave a complex web of multivalences like a musical fugue. However explosive polyphony or free play of meanings is constantly held in check particularly in his two volumes - *The Country Without Post Office* and *Rooms are Never Finished* as he finally arrives at the maturing point of his innate connection with the sacred tradition. Besides the operation of intertextuality, most of the poems in these volumes written in memory of his deceased mother and the groaning motherland are structurally held together by these rhythmic refrains from Ghalib and Faiz like:

What possibilities the earth has covered, what faces

Only a few, disguised as roses return from ashes.....

(sub khan kuch laala wo gul mein nomayen hogaein

Khak mein keya suratein hongy ki pinha hogein)

A flame dies by dawn in every shade (shama her rang mein jalti hea seher honea tak)

Doomsday but barely had taken its first breath

When I remembered again the hour you left.

Dum leya tha na qayamat nei hunuz

Phir tera waktesafar yad aaya

Or in the poem "Summers of Translation" epigraphed by a line from Faiz's "Yaad" Desolation's desert, I am here with shadows of your voice (dashte tenhai mein eh jana jehan larezan hein, teri awaaz ke sayai tera hutun ke saraab) intertwines the lines from *In Memory*, in such a way that creates an original poem of great power.

His successful experimentation with the ghazal form in English is a feat of genius. Besides invigorating his poetry with the waters of living sacred tradition, he has successfully combined subjective experiences with the objective reality of Kashmir.

The paradigmatic shift from the pervasive subjective realm to the co mingling of personal pain of the death of his mother and the pain of motherland was signaled by the political turmoil in Kashmir and the indescribable sufferings that followed in its wake, and he returned to Kashmir to feel with the suffering people and not for them. It is this empathy with his people that made his homeland a vibrant centre in his later poetry. And he returned to it to be a witness and a chronicler of the agony, the devastation and disruption of a whole tradition not with the hope of recovering what is lost but with the hope of the birth of a new world from the ashes.:

I've tied a knot with green thread at Shah Hamdan, to be untied

Only when the atrocities are stunned by your jeweled return.

In *Rooms Are Never Finished* mother and motherland crisscross each other and sometimes appear as one:

Mother, they asked me, so how is the writing?

I answered my mother is my poem.

What did they expect? For no verse

Sufficed except the promise, fading, of Kashmir in the
Hospital.

Kashmir, she is dying! How her breathing drowns out the universe

As she sleeps in Amherst. Windows open on Kashmir...

O destroyer let her return there, if just to die,

Save the right she gave its earth to cover her, Kashmir

has no rights. When the windows close on Kashmir

I see the blizzard fall of ghost elephants,

I hold back—she couldn't bear it---- (Lenox Hill)

In another poem "Above the Cities" death of his mother and the greatest tragedy of Islamic history- Karbala interpenetrate each other to become one, the intensely personal becomes simultaneously the universal.

Shahid's incredible imagination was paradoxically recharged and refurbished by the extremely turbulent times in his motherland and the loss of his mother which while universalizing the plight of motherland and the agony caused by the death of his mother,

considerably raised his poetic stature as it provided him with a fertile ground to try different poetic forms from both the east and the west to create a multicultural poetic idiom. This idiom while satisfying us at the aesthetic level, does not leave the spirit languishing as does most modern and postmodern poetry.

Literature and the Sacred

Professor G R Malik

بنادہ از مامست شد نے ما ازو
صورت از ما بست شد نے ما ازو (جلال الدین رومی)

It is We who intoxicate the wine; it is not the wine that intoxicates Us.
It is We who bring existence into being; it is not existence that brings Us into being.

ز ان می نگزیم بچشم سز در صورت - زیرا که ز معنی است اثر در صورت
این عالم صورت است و مماند صوریم - معنی نه توان دید مگر در صورت (اوحاد الدین کرمانلی)

We look at the form with physical eyes for this –
For this that it is meaning dressed in form;
This is a world of forms and we are cast in forms;
Meaning can't be discerned but in form.

سینه روشن ہو تو ہے سوز سخن عین حیات
یو نہ روشن ہو سخن مرگ دوام اے ساقی! (الباقی)

If the soul is illumined, the passion for poesy is life itself;
If not, then all poetic utterance is death everlasting.

In dealing with such a multi-faceted and momentous subject as 'Literature and the Sacred', it is necessary to begin with defining one's point of view. The Sacred tradition, enshrined in the Eastern religious heritage (Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Zoroastrian, Christian and Islamic) and the medieval European spiritual legacy, had suffered a neglect in the euphoria that overtook the world (particularly the West) after the Renaissance. The reaction to this fatal desacralisation did occur but it remained on a low key in the West, and in the East, though apparently considerable in extent, it was deficient in intellectual content and too feeble to resist the onslaught. For the past several decades however, the tradition of the Sacred is experiencing a sort of revival on intellectual lines as well, mainly through the efforts of a galaxy of distinguished thinkers with avowed mystical orientation. Rene Guenon, Frithjof Schuon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings and Syyed Hossein Nasr are the most remarkable of these thinkers. Reminiscent of Madame Blavatsky's movement of Theosophy, except that they do not restrict the presence of the Sacred in one particular doctrine or creed, these profound thinkers have identified *Sophia Perennis* or *Religio Perennis*, names which they appropriately use for the Sacred, in what Schuon called the transcendent unity of all religions. They have undertaken a total and radical review of all the aspects of the culture and civilisation (including literature and other fine arts) that developed after the Renaissance. In a brief write-up like the present one it is not possible to cover the whole of this vast, multidimensional and extremely interesting area of studies. In my write-

up, therefore, I will confine myself to the literary dimension of the subject for which the carefully chosen theme of the seminar – Literature and the Sacred – provides me a welcome excuse. As far as the great masters, whom I have just mentioned, are concerned, I am not even a speck of dust in comparison to their vision, luminosity and enormous knowledge. Indeed it will be a matter of pride for me if I could qualify to be an adequate student of their extraordinarily profound and insightful writings. But whatever I have understood of the core of their thought I must confess at the outset that, though at one with them as far as the mission of reviving the Sacred is concerned, I am not exactly on the same wavelength with them as far as the details of the discourse are concerned. Blurring of all distinctions and reconciling all disagreeables is beyond the limited scope of my mind.

Restricting myself then to the literary dimension of the theme I will begin with the beginning, defining the two terms – 'literature' and 'sacred' in the context of the present discourse. This is necessary in order to see the kinship between the two and explore its major implications.

Literature is a fine art which uses language as its medium just as the other fine arts – plastic as well as sonoral – use the mediums appropriate to them – colour, stone, brick and mortar, and sound and orchestration. Unlike other mediums, however, language is not a predominantly passive medium. It acts as effectively as it is acted upon. As the user picks it up and masters it, it modifies and even largely determines his sensibility in known and unknown ways.

At the same time, language has a not wholly explicable metaphysical connection as well. It is a gift to man from the Unseen and distinguishes him from other animals so that in the Oriental discourses man is defined as *hatwan al-natiq* (the speaking animal). The Quran relates this gift to God's Creativity and Mercy:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (الرَّحْمَنُ ١-٤)

The All-Merciful taught the Quran; created man and taught him utterance. (55: 1-4)

It is primarily because of the metaphysical nature of language that it is active in nature and not passive. This aspect of the language is realised in a considerable measure in its literary use which is creative in the fundamental sense of the word. In genuine literature words are charged with hitherto unknown meanings; life, as it were, is infused into the stuff that is dead. In this way words are made to yield their maximum possible meanings and plurisignation is generated. That is why it is not possible to adequately translate an authentic piece of literature. On the other hand very little is lost in translating non-literary discourses. From what source does the particular quality of the literary use of language flow? Passion, feeling, emotion, intuition, inspiration and many other words and terms have been used to define the source. Even those who do not accept any extra-physical dimension to human existence, experience and language like Freud, Jung, the Behaviourist psychologists and critics like I A Richards grant that the literary use of language has something mysterious and

arational about it which they attempt to explain (away) with reference to the subconscious, the Collective Unconscious and various theories about reflexes and neurotics. These branches of psychology have an undeniable value as far as inquiry into physical causation of psychic phenomena is concerned but they falter at the threshold of metaphysics.

A more mysterious and related question is thrown up by works of creative literature themselves. Some literary works outlive their time and survive for ages together, others do not. Apparently both seem to have certain literary qualities in common. What is that which imparts an immortality of sorts to some works of literature? In Aristotle's phraseology the question can be reformulated as, what makes literature more universal than history? Aristotle himself had been provided with around eight hundred plays for perusal when he was writing the *Poetics* but, excepting a few, these plays failed to survive. Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* lives on with an ever new relevance and poignancy. *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* continue to have a universal and perennial appeal. Rumi is becoming a best-seller seven and a half centuries after his death when thousands on thousands of the so-called modern and postmodern works appear upon the scene with quick speed and disappear as soon. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* continues to lend itself to ever new interpretations as if it was authored yesterday.

The reason for the mysterious and almost untranslatable quality of literary language and the reason why genuine works of art and literature possess a lasting multi-layeredness and defy mortality is that their creators are in contact with the Sacred. The greater and intenser this contact, the greater is the harmony and the beauty of a work of art which ensures its immortality:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

(Shakespeare, Sonnet XVII)

What is the Sacred? The Sacred is the Centre in the periphery, Eternity in time, Infinite in the finite and Formless in the form. All Sacred traditions embody this idea in one form or the other. In the Hindu tradition distinction is made between *Atma* and *Maya*. *Maya* mirrors the *Atma* in some way though from another view, as Schuon points out, it also veils the *Atma*, which in the mystical vision, is ultimately the same; in any case the Infinite informs the finite. The Taoist distinction between *Yang* (the active principle) and *Yin* (the passive) bears some resemblance to this. The Latin distinction between *forma* and *materia* (in Greek *eidos* and *hyle*) too has a Sacred connection. In Aristotle's vision the nature of every being and object is determined by the complementariness of *eidos* and *hyle* though he does not concede any primacy to the former but accords equal significance to both. In the Sufi doctrine *Calamus* (Qalam) corresponds to the Universal Intellect or Essence and the guarded tablet (*al-Lahw al-mahfooz*) corresponds to the *materia prima* on which *Calamus* writes the destiny of the creation.

In man, who is the microcosm, the element of the Sacred is represented by the 'soul' for which it is now better to use the word 'spirit' as in the perennial discourse 'soul' is used now as the translation for 'psyche' whereas 'spirit' is used for *al-Ruh*. The spirit is the spark of Divinity in man and enables him potentially to establish contact with the Ultimate. Without this spark man is a mere heap of dust. The Quran says that man attained his perfection only when God infused from his own spirit into him. This was the man whom God created in His own image, according to the Bible and according to a saying of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). When man cultivates his spirit he is in contact with the Sacred. To be in contact with the Sacred is then a return to one's roots analogous to the contact of tree with its roots that sustain its life. Or, to use another analogy, it is the restoration of the fish to the water. The revered Kashmiri saint Hazrat Shaikh al-Alam says:

دل چھری گلا تے بوکھہ مو تھاروں
ذکر بُد بولی دس لہو بو تھے

Thy heart is a fish, cast it not on dry land;
Give it waters of Remembrance and it shall live thereby.

When a creative artist establishes contact with the sacred by delving into the depths of his spirit and realizing its possibilities, he produces timeless works of art. As Yeats aptly wrote:

No man can create, as did Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles, who does not believe, with all his blood and nerve, that man's soul is immortal, for the evidence lies plain to all men that where that belief has declined, men have turned from creation to photography. (Elmann 250)

Yeats also denounced the art produced by a life and ambience severed from the spirit:

Fish, flesh, or fowl commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unaging intellect.

(Yeats *Sailing to Byzantium*)

Yeats's contemporary in the Eastern tradition, Iqbal, held all forms of art ephemeral which did not originate from the spirit but were only body-centred:

لہی و قلی تمام معجزہ ہائے بتر
کار جہاں ہے ثبات، کار جہاں ہے ثبات !
ہے مگر اس نقش میں رنگ ثبات دوام
جس کو کیا ہو کسی مرد خدا سے تمام (Iqbal 386)

Ephemeral and mortal are all miracles of art;
The humdrum of the world of flesh and blood is unsure.
But that artefact bears the hue of lasting life
Which a God-man has brought to perfection.

The artist with Sacred connection visualised by Yeats and Iqbal need not be placed in the straightjacket of a particular set of beliefs. He can belong to any or no denomination. The Prophet of Islam made an extremely profound remark about Umayyah bin Abissalt, a noted poet of the pre-Islamic age of Ignorance. He said *aamana she'ruhu wa-kafara qalbu* (his poetry believed even as his conscious mind disbelieved.) That is why we have glimpses of the benign presence of the Sacred even in artists who came after the Renaissance which otherwise dealt a heavy blow to the Sacred. We hear Shakespeare singing "there is a divinity that shapes our ends" (*Hamlet*, V, ii, 10) and "there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow." (*Hamlet*, V, ii, 232). Milton likewise acquiesces with all his mind and all his will to cleansing suffering that comes from above. "They also serve who only stand and wait." (Verity 1928:22). Thus in Wordsworth's words "soothing thoughts spring out of human suffering." Even P B Shelley who had to leave Oxford for his supposedly atheistic views sings from the depths of his heart:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

(*Adonais*, ll.460-63)

Needless to mention poets like Yeats and Eliot who, in their different ways, are conscious rebels against all sorts of desecralisation.

The conscious onslaught on the Sacred with the Renaissance has, however, had its insidious effect. The Sacred if not totally banished from life is certainly on ceaseless decline. This decline is reflected best in modern art and literature. From the belief in literature as autotelic, we have naturally progressed to the belief in literature as meaningless. Postmodernity has sunk further towards abysmal depths. It negates grandnarratives, one and all, while the noble edifice of the Sacred rests on one single grandnarrative, that of unity in multiplicity. In this grandnarrative, however, multiplicity is not a valueless chaos; due respect and value is accorded to the periphery but only when all lines proceeding from it point to and ultimately unite with the Centre. In the end the existence of the Centre alone is vindicated. As Shaikh Farid al Din Attar's *Mantiq al Tair* signifies, the *Simurgh* is the thirty birds and the thirty birds are the *Simurgh*.

Put in other words, the sacred values the periphery in terms of the centre, form in terms of meaning, words in terms of the Word or Logos. Postmodernism celebrates meaninglessness and chaotic multiplicity. It has got frozen in the station of *La* (negation) but alas! it is not the mystic state of the dark night of the soul which serves as prelude to final Illumination (*tajjali*). Turning its back on the Absolute, postmodernity has fallen into the mesh of the finite and the ephemeral. Titus Burckhardt sums up the plight:

The world is like a fabric made up of a warp and a weft. The threads of the weft, normally horizontal, symbolize *materia* or, more immediately, such causal relations as are rationally controllable and quantitatively definable; the

vertical threads of the warp correspond to *formae*, that is to say to the qualitative essences of things. The science and art of the modern period are developed in the horizontal plane of the "material" weft; the science and art of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, are related to the vertical plane of the transcendent warp.

(Burckhardt 120)

The theme of the present seminar pertinently asks: where to go from here? The short answer is: return to the Sacred. For such a return a favourable ambience has to be generated. Ananda Coomaraswamy and Titus Burckhardt have demonstrated that Sacred art is nurtured in the lap of a theocentric tradition. As long as such a tradition remains vital it determines the artistic image both in spirit and form in a way of which the artist may not be necessarily conscious. Such a tradition has to be recreated. Return, of course, has not to be misconstrued as disowning the present and going back to the past. It only means reinventing the present in terms of the Sacred which is timeless and ever new. Return to the sacred is at once restoration and revolution and in this holy task the Orient has to play a decisive role as it is still in possession of the inexhaustible treasures of the *Sophia perennis*:

رکھتا ہے اب تک میخانہ شرقی

وہ ہے کہ جس سے روشن ہو ادراک (Iqbal 575)

The tavern of the East is still in possession of
The liquor that can illumine understanding.

As Rumi teaches Iqbal, the spirit has to be taught to dance and realize its possibilities:

رقص تن درگردش آرد خاک را . رقص جلی بریم زند لالاک را

علم و حکم از رقص جان آید بدست . ہم زمین ہم آسمان آید بدست (Iqbal 796)

When the body dances, it is dust that dances:
The dance of the spirit turns heavens upside down.
The dance of the spirit lends access to knowledge,
It lends access to the control of earth as well as heaven.

References:

The Quran.

Aristotle, *The Poetics* trans. Ingram Bywater. London: OUP, 1920. Print.

Burckhardt, Titus. *Reflections on Sacred Art, Faiths, and Civilisations*. ed. William Stoddart, World Wisdom Inc. 2003. Print.

Eliot, T S. *Collected Poems*. London: Faber, 1936. Print.

---. *Four Quartets*. London: Faber, 1944. Print.

Ellmann, Richard. *Yeats the Man and the Masks*. London: Faber, 1960. Print.

Iqbal, Muhammad. *Kuliyat-i Iqbal: Farisi*. Lahore: Shaikh Ghulam Ali & Sons. 1973. Print.

---. *Kuliyat-i Iqbal* (Urdu). Aligarh: Educational Book House, 1975. Print.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossain. *Islamic Art and Spirituality*. OUP, 1990. Print.

Richards, I. A. *Principles of Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1924. Print.

---. *Practical Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1929. Print.

Schuon, Frithjof. *Understanding Islam*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963. Print.

---. *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. Quest Books, 1993. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Plays*. Delhi: Oxford & IBN, 1977. Print.

Shelley, P. B. *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. ed. Thomas Hutchinson. London: OUP, 1970. Print.

Verity, A W. *Milton's Sonnets*. Cambridge University Press, 1928. Print.

Wordsworth, William. *Poetical Works* ed. Thomas Hutchinson. London: OUP, 1964. Print.

Yeats, W. B. *Collected Poems*. London: Macmillan & Company Ltd, 1961. Print.

In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, the Word was God said the Biblical prophet... In our own tradition we know that Wakh, or Word belongs to God. Goethes' Faust isn't convinced. So in the opening lines of his play, the hero wrote that in the beginning was the Deed rather than the Word. Here are the relevant lines: "The Word I cannot set supremely high/A new translation I will try.../I read, if by the spirit I am taught, /This sense 'In the beginning was the thought, Yet while the pen is urged with willing fingers/A sense of doubt and hesitancy lingers. /the spirit comes to guide me in my need, /I write,' in the beginning was the Deed."

The two declarations have become antagonistic parties in the battle for literature. Those who regard the sacred Word as beyond question consider the writer as an extraordinary genius (a typical romantic gesture) and attribute to the writer the status of legislator of mankind. Such a conception of literature looks upon a work as a radiator of a particular kind of effulgence not obtained elsewhere. W. H. Abrams's notion of the mirror and the lamp just about encapsulates this belief. As the Word or the Wakh belongs to God, literature by association acquires a sacred aura. This is the closest we can come to talk of literature and the sacred. The Word or language in less exalted signification becomes a revelation. Or even a radiation. It is sui generis; it carries its own justification. Through it we enter the boundless sphere of God's presence. And face its transformative power. The Word becomes the World as it enters human consciousness without human mediation. Language becomes a paradise, a utopian presence while we are exposed to its divine ministrations. As Milton says in Book XII of *Paradise Lost*: "Then wilt thou not be loath to leave this paradise, but shalt possess a paradise within thee, happier far". Or as Theodore Roethke says 'The body, delighting in threshold, rocks in and out of itself'. In this way poetry becomes an utterance rather than a statement, an epiphany rather than an observation. When we are face to face with scripture, we experience this epiphany within ourselves and we confer on the literary or poetic utterance a divinity which underwrites our being and which gives it value. When James Joyce spoke of the epiphany in *Stephen's Hero*, he spoke of it as an emanation of the Word in the world, of the divine in the mundane. The revelatory character of the Word has been accepted by a non-visionary philosopher like Aristotle who called revelation recognition and discovery. Such ideas often lead to a direct deification of the word which in turn becomes a mystic essence. And the writer a magus as in Plato. Such magical or semi-magical interpretation of the art of creation is still prevalent in certain literary quarters. An early 20th century Russian Acemist poet Gumilev has expressed these thoughts in poetic form. As he says, 'In days of yore when over a world still new/God leaned his head, it was a word/which made the sun stop in his course/and towns were ruined by a word? But we forgot the word alone is blessed/Mid terrors that are sent us for a rod, /and to the gospel that was writ by John/'tis said the word is-God.

Although we have invested the scripture with a revelatory character, we also recognise the fact that we cannot confine the Word to the heights of the divine or the transcendental. Literature is also an event, an unfolding within the quotidian world of time and space. Literature is as much grounded in human experience in time as it is in the timeless sphere of the sacred. It is as much a matter of what Goethe's Faust called the deed as it is that of the Word. And let me add here that whenever we speak of literature, we speak of it as a this-worldly enterprise concerned with what Keats and later on E. M. Forster termed the holiness of heart's affections. What Eric Heller says about poetry is true of all literature...In his essay the hazard of modern poetry' he suggests e that 'poetry is concerned with the true stature of things; also that it is the vindication of a valuable and a meaningful world" The idea of literature as Deed involves a sense of the writer or artist as one who acts in this world to make sense of it. Here one must hasten to add that the worldly space the artist occupies is not always a sacred space, indeed it is tainted with the deprivations and deficits that we inherit in the course of our history as both individual human beings and as members of a society, a community. When Conrad's hero Lord Jim is asked by Stein to immerse in the destructive element, he means what I mean by confronting the terrors of history by immersing into rather than escaping from the world. In the sacred time of the gods, nature and man are one, in the worldly time or what Hegel was to call dialectical time human development is a teleological movement and not a sudden transformation or revelation. As the great writer Borges put it in the parable 'Borges and I 'it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is the fire that consumes me, but I am the fire. The world, unfortunately is real I unfortunately am Borges'. In other words, literature cannot sustain itself by simply being revelatory; it has to have its grounding in the human person as well as the human condition. Herbert Read quoting Hegel believes that the function of sculpture (as of other arts) is to present the divine in its infinite repose' and contrasts it with the disruption into contingent existence, a world that is broken into complex forms and movements.

The sense of the sacred, then, traverses the whole gamut of divine revelation and the challenges of the destructive element in both nature and society. Since the originary Word is embedded in the words the writer or the images the artist deals in, we cannot escape the worldliness of the literary/artistic enterprise because literature is created out of language and language is a product of the development of human consciousness as it experiences the world. One need not go all the way with Wittgenstein to say that language is the limit of human consciousness, but one can, nevertheless, not escape the shaping influence of language on the human consciousness. It is not for nothing, that George Steiner lamented the corruption of the German language in the whole period of the Nazi domination of Europe and the fact that post-war German poets chose to write an austere poetry to remove the taint of complicity from contemporary German.

Scholars of religion have drawn a comparison between the sacred and the profane. Building on Rudolph Otto's seminal treatise *The Sacred* (1917) Eliade in his lectures titled *The Sacred and the Profane* makes the distinctions clear."The sacred and the profane are two modes of being in this world, two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history. These modes of being in the world are not of concern only to the history of religions or to sociology; in the last analysis, the sacred and the profane modes of being

depend upon the different positions that man has conquered in the cosmos; hence they are of concern to the philosopher"...Eliade might have added to the artist, the writer and the musician as much as to the rest of them. Eliade also talks of a sacred space which gives to every religion a fixed point of reference. In epic works such as *Iliad* and *Mahabharat*, the sacred pervades the profane; the worldly in the constant interaction between the gods and the humans. But this can also create friction between the two and break the unity that the religious sense of the sacred assumes. The violence we see in *Iliad* and which Simone Weil sees at the heart of Homer's text reveals the fragility of the sacred compact. Similarly the horror of the war between the Kaurvas and Pandavas in the Indian epic belies the designs of a God-ordained cosmos. As Rene Girard says in his classic book *Violence and the Sacred*, the sacred and the monstrous coexist everywhere. In Greek Drama violence is the staple on which the plots revolve. The violence of possessive nature in *Medea* which results in the murder of Jason's children, the violence of the house of Atreus, the violence of Euripides's mad protagonists in *Heracles* and other plays, follow the intervention of gods in human affairs. Hegel has already noted the fact that the dark powers attack from ambush, from the unknown. The overriding and exemplary paradox of the sacred and the sacrilegious co-existing in literary creations such as the Greek tragic drama reinforces the doubleness of our existence in the world. It is this doubleness that makes Greek tragedy in particular and tragedy in general so powerful in the pre-scientific age. We are told by Aristotle that tragedy offers a catharsis, but Nietzsche is right in asking in the *Birth of Tragedy* as to what kind of society could give rise to such a genre, one that celebrates such deep and desolating terrors. Tragedy offers a challenge to the sacred when it presents the impossibility of the Word becoming incarnate. Shakespeare's *Timon* says 'let the language end'. And it did in Euripides' *Bacchae* in which human beings are transformed into speechless beasts. The paradox of tragedy, then, is also a paradox of logos, language, as we notice in the postmodern undermining of the creative power of language.

But we are not concerned simply with religious connotations of the sacred. We are not concerned with the quest for a religious life as presented in Dante's and Milton's epics as well as in the poems of Richard Crashaw in English or the Sufi poets in other poetic traditions. What I am concerned with are the ways in which the sense of the sacred permeates our worldliness, our here and now. One is to trace it in what Eliot calls the still-point, the centre (Eliade calls it the central axis for all future orientation)... Eliot himself sought this through a religious quest, as in the later *Quartets*. D.H.Lawrence regarded sexual love as the culminating centre of an epiphany which is both erotic and sacred or, in Lawrence's terms, sacred because erotic... This can be illustrated by closely attending to the language of his novel *The Rainbow*. In this novel three generations of the Brangwens seek an ecstasy which for us, the readers, becomes both a profane sexual climax and a revelation of the sacred. This twin effect is achieved by his truly original art of narrative iteration approximating to a chant. If we analyze the rendering of sexual scenes in this novel we shall notice a repetition of similar experiences (Lawrence called them allotropic states) by the Tom-Lydia couple and the Anna-Will couple, a repetition of movements of the physical bodies climaxing both in sexual release and a state of what the author calls mingling. That the third generation of Ursula Brangwen and Anton Skrebensky fails to achieve this type of consummation is

because by the time this generation grows up, the rapport between the human and the natural has broken down. The sacred has been completely taken over by the profane. The Country and the City (in Raymond Williams's classification) has drifted apart. I am not sure if Georg Lukas had read Lawrence's novel, but on the basis of his comparison of the epic being and the novelistic being in the early *Theory of the Novel*, Lawrence's book, though grounded in the transition between the Victorian and the modern age, has the texture of an epic tale. Joyce's *Ulysses* too is an epic, but one of wandering, drift and rootlessness, though home is beckoning Stephen Dedalus throughout the course of the novel and remains an ironic point of light. Lawrence's novel also acquires a quasi-mythic structure in that it re-enacts the primal gesture of love through different generation of Brangwens, fulfilling Mircea Eliade's prophecy of the myth of the eternal return.

The impulse towards the sacred has another dimension in literature, the Bardic ambitions of writers to become the consciences of their nations. In contemporary thinking these ambitions are expressed in the concern to save civilization from barbarians. In modern English poetry Yeats, Eliot and Auden have, in their own ways, sought to redeem mankind through an attempt to save their respective communities. Communities, nations, not mankind in general, because though ambitious in their salvatory mission, they could not rise above the social, economic and political pressures of their times that made the accomplishment of their mission difficult. Yeats created a utopia of his native Irish peasant culture, Eliot and Auden sought to restore what they thought to be the dissociation of sensibility by harking back to the 17th century. Yeats had hoped to 'create 'a type of man whose most moving religious experience would bring with it imagery to connect it with an Irish multitude now and in the past time' (Explorations)...His past time shares with William Morris a certain kind of medievalism that he brings forth in his poetry. Eliot's community, as he postulates it in *Idea of a Christian Society* is equally non-abstract. "I am not here attempting to convert", he says and suggests a pattern, an organization of values for a futuristic society. He seeks to effect social and economic changes only through spiritual change by confronting what he calls liberalism that destroyed traditional social habits of the people. He foresees a community of Christians, "a small and mostly self-contained group attached to the soil". Like Eliot and Yeats, Auden also visualized a small group of individuals, of citizens creating what he called a civitas of sound. In his *New Year Letter* he puts it this way: "A Cottage in Long Island Shone/Where Buxtehude as we played/One of his passacaglias made/our minds a civitas of sound//where nothing but assent was found". Such certitude seems a little shaky when we realize that in the same poem he had grasped the predatory character of capitalism and the Economic Man.: "Of Luther's faith and Montaigne's doubt.../emerged a new anthropos, an/empiric Economic Man, /the urban, prudent, uninventive/profit his rational motive."

In other words they had already sensed the trend in which poetry would be of no use. The Word that emanated from God had already lost its power. Rilke too had sensed the snapping of the bond between creation and its creator and expressed his fear in the first of the *Dui no Elegies*: "...Alas, who is there/we can make use of? Not angels, not men; /and already the knowing brutes are aware/that we don't feel securely at home/ within our interpreted world..." The following lines of T. S. Eliot from *Four Quartets* are not only true of the

failure of language, but of the failure of communication as a whole: "Words strain,/ crack and sometimes break, under the burden,/Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,/Decay with imprecision...so each venture /is now a beginning, a raid on the inarticulate/ with shabby equipment always deteriorating..." and Auden was lamenting that 'all I have is a voice' In his plays *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *Ascent of F6*, he had denounced the 'orator', the persuaders who project grandiose plans to save mankind. As the Abbot says in the latter, "You wish to conquer the Damon and then to save Mankind"? But by the time he came to write *September 1, 1939* and *Spain*, his ardour for the big causes had died down and he recognized that, as Yeats had in *Countess Cathleen* that his art didn't matter. Refusing to claim moral or personal authority, and refusing to encourage the public to admire him as somehow heroic (unlike Yeats or Hemingway for that matter); Auden preferred to present himself as less than he was. An Arcadian who wanted to live without harming anyone else and not as a stern-minded utopian who fantasizes an ideal future and destroy everything in its realization...As he says in his prose poem 'Vespers' "I am an Arcadian, he is a Utopian/He notes with contempt my Aquarian belly: /I note with alarm his Scorpion's mouth/He would like to see me cleaning latrines: I would/like to see him removed to some other planet." And in "Cave of Making" composed in peaceful Austria, he noted "More than ever/life- out-there- is goodly miraculous loveable. /but we shant, not since Stalin and Hitler/trust ourselves ever again: we know that, /subjectively, /all is possible'. A similar sentiment is expressed by Yeats when he says; we must descend where all ladders start/in the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

Today, the bardic voice has been lost in the labyrinths of mere textuality. The culture of post-modernism has reduced everything to discourse. To quote George Steiner in *Real Presences*, 'it is against this encompassing background of the crisis of the word, of the abrogation of meaning, that we can ... grasp ...the negative impulses towards deconstruction...'...The deconstructive saturnalia, the carnival of dislocations, the masques of non-meaning' have made the voice of art meaningless. The post-modernism's devaluation of logocentrism is in itself carried out in logocentric terms, deconstruction's militant drive towards textuality and the dance of significations goes back to Shakespeare's Bottom in *Mid-Summer Night's Dream* (Act III, Sc 1, lines 26-44). The move to self-reflexivity, to self-parody and the consequent dismantling of grounded meanings and reflections deriving from Bottom have in postmodernist thought reached their apogee in the annihilation of value formerly ascribed to literary texts (what Walter Benjamin called their aura). This has resulted in the devaluation of the Word into mere language and to the claim of Jacques Lacan that 'the world of language...creates the world of things'. This statement denies the world of sense its autonomy of being and privileges language and the writerly text above what comes out of the word. So that Paul De Man can claim that the literary text represents not its imaginative power and outreach, but its self-blindness and anti-humanist bafflement at the rises of figurative language with no ground of meaning and symbolism and communication. And, as a consequence of this denial of materiality to a literary work, Stanley Fish sum up this suspicion of the materiality of a literary text by asking the question": is there is text in the class room at all'. By finding its justification in Heideggerian and Nietzschean anti-foundationism, deconstructive practice can tell us nothing meaningful about the classics of

literature except to insist that texts are always already inherently contradictory. Terry Eagleton elaborates in his most recent volume *The Event of Literature* (2013), 'deconstruction marks the point at which the decline of the humanist heritage modulates into militant anti-humanism" (p.104). No wonder that tragedy, a literary form that exalts the heroism of human suffering is not a major form of literary expression. No contemporary work of literature has the sublimity of Goethe whose Faust is received with joy after his souls taken away or the stoic nobility of Yeats's poem *Lapis Lazuli* in which Hamlet and Lear Are 'gay' 'gaiety transfiguring their dread'.

Does all that I have suggested so far denote that in our present age, racked by crisis, violence and injustice, no lasting writing is possible? Is Adorno's statement that after Auschwitz no writing is possible true? Have we reached a point at which, as the hero of Eric Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* says that 'horror is that there is no horror'? Bertolt Brecht asked the same question: "In the dark times, will there be singing?", and answered it himself: "Yes, there will be singing / about the dark times". Believing himself to be belonging to a lost generation ("we know we are only temporary and after us will follow/nothing worth talking about. *On Poor B.B.*), he found salvation in communism but died as a disillusioned man but not before warning that 'the guileless word is folly. A smooth forehead/suggests insensitivity' to those born later.. Looking at Carolyn Forché's anthology *Against Forgetting*, we note how contemporary poets are re-discovering the power of language to reveal, to ignite and to experiment in new ways. They stand, in the words of the great Russian poet Anna Akhmatove, 'as witness to the common lot/survivor of that time that place.'

But I would now like to draw attention to three novels, two in German and one in Hebrew in which the authors, Hermann Broch, Thomas Mann and Y.S. Agnon, grappled with the demons of dark times looming over the vocation of an artist. I choose these writers because they seem to me to capture in their distinctive ways the very same existential dilemmas that the canonical writers, now despised by the postmodernist reader and the academy alike face. Hermann Broch's novel *Death of Virgil*, like Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* and Y.S. Agnon's *Shira*, is concerned with the position of the artist in the world and history. He asks whether a writer is after all God and whether he can refurbish language to enable it to escape the debasement of the terrible times. Its chief protagonist, the poet Virgil is teetering between life and death and wishing to burn his great poem *Aeneid*, asks whether the poet's pursuit of beauty and aesthetic purity can prevent 'laughter that destroys reality'. This novel, like everything Kafka wrote, renounces entertainment and, his hero (in this case the poet Virgil), is Everyman who serves as Broch's vehicle for his philosophical speculations on life, death, language and creativity. With such a preoccupation the novel becomes a parable for the fate of art in our dark times, a parable which is presented as a form of a dream whose infinite ambivalences in relation to the real Virgil is intensified by Broch's lyrical prose sustained over 500 pages of close print. This in itself is a feat of artistry comparable to the subtle modulations of tone and pitch in Proust's great novel and spans the gap between Proust's rich and abundant life and Kafka's empty presences. Virgil philosophizes about the fate of the poet. "Love's power of remembrance", Virgil muses, "had

forced Orpheus to enter the depth of Hades...He was prematurely impelled to return...unable to send forth the loving recollection and guided by no memory..." With this insight into the crisis of our times, Virgil despairs of poetry and decides to burn his poem. In the hour of his death, he recognizes 'art's ...despairing attempt to build up the imperishable from things that perish". This deep pessimism is in line with the general tendency to denigrate art or the word, which postmodernism sedulously fosters. Paradoxically, Broch, though despairing of art, abandons himself to the lyricism and music of words to redeem the ugliness and squalor of our world. This is evident in the descriptions of landscape, the sea that brings home Virgil's ship and the melancholy tone of his ruminations on life, death and time. The novel's lyrical brooding lifts it to a plane where its innate gloom is irradiated by something approximating hope, something Nietzsche achieved in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and Rilke in *Duino Elegies*.

Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus* differs from both Marlowe's and Goethe's plays. Whereas in Marlowe Faust's damnation was complete and whereas Goethe's play looks optimistically at the coming of new scientific knowledge ('It is possible ...fast in my mind plan upon plan unfolds...'lines 10218-10222)), in Thomas Mann Faust encounters the spectre of Nazism that drives him mad. Adrian Leverkühn says in the novel, 'What human beings have fought for and stormed citadels, what the extatics exultantly announced, I will take it back' As we know, Leverkühn is a musician who strives to keep his art alive under the Nazi threat and ends up in insanity, but not before composing his last testament '*The Lamentation of Dr. Faustus*'. Mann approaches the threat of fascism as a cultural movement. His hero Leverkühn, a musician struggling to keep his music alive, is the epitome of the artist in an age when the Word has lost its resonance and 'jackboots on the march' erase every semblance of artistic presence. In this atmosphere Mann's lingering attachment to the bourgeois world is completely broken, as is to be seen not only in his own exile to California but also in Adrian Leverkühn's alienation from his world. Earlier in *Magic Mountain* he had foreseen bourgeois culture as a disease symbolized in the Swiss sanatorium where Hans Castrop is admitted; but in *Mario the Magician* and *Doctor Faustus* he expresses his fear that, to quote from Leverkühn's reflections, 'art is stuck and grown too heavy and scorneth itself...man playeth the truant and breaketh out in hellish drunkenness, so giveth he his soul thereto and cometh among the carrion'. Adrian Leverkühn's personal tragedy becomes the tragedy of art under fascism. Georg Lukacs writing about Mann says, 'It becomes simultaneously the tragedy of Germany, indeed the whole of bourgeois humanity today'. Housebound after his paralytic stroke, Leverkühn finally dies when Germany is at the height of her dissolute triumphs'. Through his death we are made to realize without overtly getting into the politics of the artist's situation the death of art itself, of the primal word or the musical note through which art had enriched society.

In Y.S. Agnon's *Shira* the crisis of literature (the title in Hebrew means both poetry and milk as also the name of his mistress, both nourishing the artist's soul), is highlighted not only in his frequent references to writers as different as Goethe, Nietzsche, Balzac and Stefan George, but also in the protagonist Manfred Herbst's clumsy attempts to write a play on the model of Greek tragedy. Is it because of the impossibility of tragedy after the advent of

Hitler? Or is it due to Herbst's socratic nature derived from his German academic upbringing which frowns upon the tragic as irrational, even though Herbst manages to see a copy of Nietzsche's 'Birth of tragedy' in an antiquarian shop in Jerusalem. That tragedy endows suffering with meaning escapes him altogether. Death and renunciation are other motifs intimately linked with the theme of poetry and nourishing. The leper and the Byzantine medievalism to which Herbst is drawn may serve as an emblem of Herbst's final retreat into the leper hospital and an intimation of death as in Herbst's recollection of the dead soldier in the First World War. All mock his sterile scholarship. His descent into and surrender to Eros and art amidst the political turmoil in Jerusalem and the approaching holocaust make his academic pursuits futile.

All these maverick speculations seem to lead to a sobering and chastening thought, best expressed in my favourite poet W. H. Auden's poem 'Death's echo': The desires of the heart are as crooked as corkscrews/Not to be born is the best for man/the second-best is a formal order,/the dance's pattern; dance while you can'.

Or to Iqbal's positive assertion: khuda ke bande to hain hazaron/banoon me phirte hain maree, marre/main us ka banda banoon ga jisko/khuda ke bandoon se pyar hoga.

Keshav Malik

This paper may well amount to aiming shots in the dark. The subject proposed could perhaps appear to be shrouded in a mist of abstraction, even when being magnetic to the imagination. Having had no foreknowledge as to who the other participants to the seminar were, from which particular sphere of activity, at home in which specific style or styles of discourse, I have had a bit of an apprehension that the discussion may spin in circles, amid cross-purposes, misconceptions, generalities and so on. Such a lot after all can be evidently stuffed in the expression 'sacred', so charged it is with ambiguity that all of us could be right without arriving at any clear agreement, not having achieved any richer meaning through our deliberations. Nonetheless the subject, or the occasion, seems to bristle with excitement.

One of the chief reasons for this difficulty is the sheer ideality of the topic for discussion. Questions relating to things, enquiry pertaining to fact or plain occurrence are rather more within the rightful purview of the specialized - trained - mind, than the imponderables relating to mankind, and all of which are, so to say, a bit ambiguous in nature, and which fact in turn also means that they are in the religious sphere - - that is in an area involving wish, desire, aspiration, choice, and so on. The ambiguity of the expression, thus, inheres in one broad fact, of its being unformed or open ended, in at least the deeper, qualitative essence.

So I ask, are we gathered here to solve neutral problems (of what ever genre) or are we here to reveal to ourselves the contours of our own secret personalities, inner bents, some obdurate unmalleable psychic material which is not amenable to cultural tampering, or social improvement, but which instead better be accepted to be the very premise, the departure as well as the arrival point of all our laborious efforts, of all our will to being and becoming and so on. Till we grant or discover such subjective groundwork of self, our forays into the ambiguous will remain brilliant but barren exercises that are only partly relevant to our observed behavior. Is there any psychic substance in us, the gathered individuals, that eludes our conscious reasoning faculties, one that will give us the slip at the last moment, that comes before all logic and rational planning and which in truth is the patron towards whom we cannot stand in a condescending relationship? If we do establish such an entity (however impalpable, and nevertheless vital, with attributes which it would be hard for us to define or enumerate too neatly) then we can return afresh to continue our struggle with our path ahead. A stable point, however complex and difficult of description or definition it might be, needs to be assumed and affirmed, that is before any such plan of action can be hypothesized, or rather before any axiology or value frame can be outlined in all its intricate hierarchy of dimension.

How do we arrive at such a slippery customer? What analysis, inference, experimentation, or deduction will aid us in such a quest? Admittedly the query is fruitless in one sense. The thing has to be almost accepted on personal faith and which last I define as

that propensity in the reasonable, acculturated adult (who though he accepts most things only on tested facts or if faith, then a faith which is really goodwill towards those expert in one field or another) takes the fact or the value or sacredness of self or the inner substance from his own living; his own, or that recorded in the testaments of literature - - those parables, human chronicles or the legends of unusual lives. Now this faith, unlike the faith which offers positive knowledge is open to error but it is also the harbinger or promoter of value, the word I have been fighting back so far. The question of worth arises with the coming of a consciousness shared in common, and which is well above the 'drives and needs', as scientific disciplines may define them.

What sort of sacral do we have in mind, the one of a particular race or that envisioned through the screen of value as experienced by individuals at moments of grace in their lives; value which could be said to be imbibed by scanning the story of the human sojourn on earth. The shared value that I have in mind, is shared not quantitatively, en masse (like the values which simpler goals, drives and needs acquire) but value which distinctly pertains to those functions of the personality, those interchanges - - the moral processes - - between the head and the heart which lead to the creation or the coming into being (however tentatively) of the inner person. Here then is the prime value, prime because at moments it helps one be totally immune to one's own socio-economic or bio-existence. The so-called inner person is a functioning, going psychic concern within the continuum or context of something which could not be exchanged for some other good. I believe this concern must be postulated as the core value of human effort.

The somatic drives and urgencies of human existence, and the catering to them by the custodians of common institutions take care only of a small part of the substance of mankind. Drives, precedent in terms of time, causatively ahead, are secondary in terms of value, because the man who really lives, lives directed towards the self which is not yet, the potential to be. Thus the primacy, the honour, the pride of place in terms of worth or importance goes, in an integrated disciplined society to those experiencings or states of being which are, or appear to be in a thin minority, a rarity, intermittent, only occasional visitors on the human stage. Rare but galvanizing, their power is disproportionate to their spatial extension or temporal duration.

Where is the human soul, self or spirit rooted? Most assuredly in the field of naturalistic forces. But there is this, that this variously named entity (a state of being really) has become independent of its progenitor - - i.e. the immediate, circumstantial or material causation and the compulsions endemic to it. Soul is the name for that power of independence, to act, to be, not meaning to endure - - on motives which are in seeming diametric opposition to values of personal survival. It, apparently, has little care for its position in the social or power nexus. This may be deemed obduracy or obstinacy in the face of facts, though, from the long term perspective of human history (or hindsight at least) it is no mere perversity.

Some such model of the human centre must be accepted if we are to proceed any further with our task of erecting a framework of values, to distinguish between primary value

and tertiary or the instrumental ones. There must be one universal pattern, before the patterns of society, or its multifarious conditions can be profitably talked about or developed. And certainly at the core of some great literature, this primary value is implicit, say in Dante.

The human prospect hinges on this: the realization, that, social institutions, political patterns and ultimately - - at base -- the model that informs such institutions etc. must refer back to those psychic elements in the individual who, if he so chooses, can become an integrated person. Social endeavour remains calamitous without this timeless foresight.

What are the forces at play in our world? Control of material and social realities by power-blessed individuals, by super-systems of individuals - - so far so good. And what are individuals? - - combinations of beliefs-unbeliefs, conscious reasonings, subconscious, half articulate thoughts. Thus, in the post-Freud period it should not be difficult to see, that, the irrational element in human nature still plays a big enough part in the seemingly impeccable calculations, promptings, and moves of nations, and efficiently reasoning individuals; of little import then that the public image of nation-state seems so decorous, as though all sweetness and light. Indeed scientifically speaking even the world's physical circumstances are not fully in rational control, less than half so, if that.

I'm not suggesting that fellow humans are full of ill-will; no, but then there is this paradox, that born to a socio-cultural ethos which is the consequence of seeming missionary enthusiasm or zeal for material or structural improvements, from melioristic view-points people can now have difficulty granting cogence, pride of place to that inner, personal vertical self which, to my mind can only be neglected at civilization's dire peril. Rival institutions of tremendous power, often champions for human good but unwittingly for ill, hold back the energies of the self, great literature postulates, in check. Thus, under the present dispensation (of huge concentrated power) it is inevitable that the activities of the deeper self are greatly reduced or buried. They are turned to apathy, passivity or a simple resignation- - even as the outward, intellectual man remains alert, active, soberly reasoning. But where the deeper self has gone to sleep or is suppressed, there lurks danger, to its possessor as to society. Post-Tolstoy we know where the danger is, quite invisible though it may be to work-a-day eyes.

In new politico-social orders, brought into existence eagerly and expressly, is yet seen the ground for a pessimistic outlook and much bafflement, for does not, the grand progress of this world, and as of others, end up in much recurring regress, in unheroic, mean unpleasantness, in clannish pettiness; yes led to pure mindlessness not meaning brainlessness? Yes, sundry pettinesses all, they range from putting a few millions to sleep, to denial of shelter to strangers. Perhaps cruelty is still 'human' though in a barbaric style. But what of the civilized unwarlike impersonality, with its absence of common feeling? Is it not a resultant of excessive braininess?--the desire for gigantism - - at bottom the simple need of an unformed soul for glory, vanity, condescension, or the cultivation of styles of life which are heavily biased towards the fun and games of outward activities. Here in the self born of mutual sharing, identification and sympathy (or of religious unity) is only in an incipient condition, not brought to birth. A state lacking in individuals with such selves has to it little

of the future alternatives or the deeper self-determinations. A society needs power, of all sorts, and of course it needs to share such power and goods, else it comes to grief through sheer lower level conflicts.

But a given society's power (the supreme) is the power of those of its creative individuals who stand in opposition to mere collectivity, not perversely, but purely procedurally, like one electric pole to the other; without this no creative charge is produced. The power of spirit (an old fashioned term perhaps, and non-scientifically couched) certainly can be explained in scientific terms, but its true meaning emerges to one only in the process of living in interchange; it can hardly be well conveyed through discursive, propositional language. The power of such spirit must remain constant in any society, and its meaning must repeatedly be clarified and amplified by the arts, and that meaning must stand in a central position vis-à-vis the equations of power.

I certainly do not mean by the word spirit, the desacrificed intellect; this sophistic mind is not what we are in want of today nor do I mean by it the functions dispersed by any sort of orthodox or state priesthood. I mean by the worn out expression this - - that working unity of the aesthetic-moral intellect, before whose labours in the world the individual bows down or at least the ego bows down, at the least inwardly. It would certainly, therefore, to my way of thinking not do to desacrifice or denude psychic concepts and meanings, and so on of their patina of intention, feeling and sentiment. The fructifying chemistry of myth must remain as it was or there is spiritual erosion (like there is in the disappearance of vegetation over bare rock), an end to life-giving celebration over plain fact. And little remains of value or the sacral. Under these circumstances, human prospects, human future, cannot have much taste, and will only have outward, still more acrimonious conflicts; and if not that there will be an atrophy in sympathy or relationships, a fact corroborated by many novelists and thinkers of the world directly, or else by revealing the lack of emotion or life-interest in their characters, indirectly. The literature of apathy and emptiness is well known. Most of such literature as also the psychoanalyst's case studies pertain to day-to-day 'developed' mankind.

The task for the humanities is that of a reassessment of human development; have we by good intentions, by applying our minds diligently arrived at an elevated position but where no literature is possible and where the grand public ritual has to it, little of the sap of life? The proposition is this: can man retain reasonable self-possession, self assurance, freedom from the cramping twilight of fear, be the master of 'his fate', yet combine it all with an essential imagination- engendered humility, a lack of racial or religious conceit, lack of self idolatry? To any culture, mood or attitude is all important; humility, or conceit, which is it to be? - - if a civilization (an amalgam of complicated horizontal and vertical values) retains in its mood a charity towards 'other' races and neighbours, and if it does not overrate its own brilliance and inventiveness to the point of arrogance, culture is right. A modicum of understanding may, here, be possible between humans. In other words conflicts between humans are not merely economic, those are also cultural born as, say, of an inordinate pride or a Mandarin aloofness. But a civilization which has learnt to retain at its core the sympathetic mood of literature (that concentration upon the activities of the human soul in its loves and despairs) has the possibility of essential balance. Such civilization does not

denigrate human intellect or inventive or conceptual cleverness but it does not over value it, not turn it into mere material for power; it has no avarice for unalloyed political privilege. What I have been trying to sell is, what I claim to be the central value for the individual - - the queen bee to which all the other 'bees' of values subscribe. It is the image of spiritual excellence that different societies and different strata of populations have harboured in their bosoms, that matters in the end.

The value or the perennial pattern par excellence must be universal, cutting across continents, stemming as it would from the essential human quality, of a humane character rooted in imagination, which, without being fanatical still has nerve. Now in a culture, increasingly given to research, analysis, cerebration, often employed on purely state-backed humanitarian causes, subjective character almost evaporates. The 'centre' disappears or else it inheres, not in being whole but purely in observing detachedly, noticing uninvolvedly and so on. If a whole society gives itself up to this, somewhat cold bloodedness, it loses an essential focus; it forgets that it is a still creature. What has happened is, that this society has lost itself in an excessive calculation of the phenomenal world; it is now in terms of affect much too 'outside' of the world, and cannot act from conviction; it has no power of decision from deep within. Now the new technological culture, abundantly rich as it is in engineered creativity and fraught with great and good possibilities for the future of mankind is, for the moment, short on one important component (to use the mechanistic terminology!): the new society does not seem to know that it also needs the services of that energy within mankind which though not based on scientific reasoning, is nonetheless the vital heart of man's psyche qua man. An energy which, in other words, fatefully effects his behavior both by acts of omission as of commission; here is a psychosomatically rooted element and not a construct to be ordered into being by fiat. This, so to say seed, needs slow nurture; requires that much allowance be made to it by legislatures, law courts, the sovereign. It is a seed of being, one that prospers on awe and wonder, and in turn extracts submission from all who have come under its spell. Its mystery is not open to too much analysis, it being a growth not a measurable quantity. Question is, what is the relationship of the individual to the whole, to his ethos, to the sum and substance of his life, that this seed represents? Is the relationship only contractual or is it also irrevocable in some essential meaning of that term? The future which I would see realized, for realistic as well as idealistic reasons is one in which some sort of sacred is reestablished at the heart of the individual and, thus, of the human community.

There is, or ought be, the following aside as one begins to think of that trying matter, of tradition vs modernity; literature vs sacred. That the sacred or the numinous must be secured from its warpings and degenerations in traditional social orders, which rich though they are in feeling, are also iniquitous by virtue of their frequent absentmindedness towards questions of the just relations between groups, in between communities, as well as in being weak in the repertoire of rational-empirical thought. The sacred cannot live too securely in company with an inhuman environment or where social conflicts are merely suppressed, where the human personality is merely crushed under denials. Scientific modes of thought (which plainly are prosaic realistic modes, began already in the ancient world, though without the new application) are quite contrary to the excessively ritual modes of human behavior

(verbal or any other); and during the prevalence of only overly ritual modes little open enquiry had been possible as to nature or human institutions. But enquiry is important even to ritual. Any fresh reorganization of institutions and laws, based on its results could save the sacred (or feeling) from being perverted in the dark superstitions of the sub-mind which flourishes in a culture of mental poverty. And yet the 'sacred' must not be confused or mistaken for all these various enlightened processes of today, which are more functional than fateful - - the sacred is a life and death concern of self with itself, with all its headaches, of meaning, goal, purpose. For too many of the outward problems stem from inwards, from the root - - they have not been quite so linked, causatively. Any design for living must observe, that, too often childish human wishes, even as at times genuine vision, set history into motion, this or that way; that these wishes are the true directors of the human drama; and these secret pathetic, soulless wishes must be inspected closely.

The dichotomies between economic, social, political forces and so on are facts, but these disturbing realities must in turn be examined in the light of the energy expended by society on different personal goals. If a nation has little energy to spare for privacies - - to separate things Ceaser's and not Ceaser's and if all of life is made out to be public question or problem - no alter-ego, alter-self will be left to compare, contrast and test existing values and realities. Truth emerges only in contests, by relative contrasts, or mutual self questionings by different powers of self. When this is not possible, passivity, fanaticism or unrealism result - as seems to be the case today when unbridled economic growth or power has become the holiest of desires. These only lead to conflict by their very nature, since they stem from material interests, that cannot ever be spiritually productive. Only conflicts on the plane of spirit or ideas can be creative - - i.e. of course if they are not mere facades, for material goals. There will have to be radical shifts, in emphasis, on the priorities of social effort, as well as a realization of the proper goals of political or collective heroism.

The sacred, then concerns the individual qua individual, or that part of him which can commune with his fellows, and share sentiment, but it can do so only through some non-coercive agency i.e. through insights; sympathy, the growth in fraternal feeling and so on. The power delegated to the state cannot bring this about. Here, the state must learn to leave it alone, not cultivate a national church.

I doubt, however, if the states of today will soon learn to shed their paternalisms, the tendency to organize, rationalize, explicate all manner of activity, even if it be most private. Thus, when nothing remains in shadow or shade, nothing of the sort I deem important can ever germinate; and since power, as one knows, has its own logic of destructive conflict, an interference in the secret processes of the human soul is on the cards. The state (or organized power-often, according to antediluvian, archaic images and models of the collective self) itself bloats and batters on science or, rather, scientific knowhow and quantified proposition and argument, strained of all charge or sense of human emotion and sentiment. Now therefore, science plays into the hands of the atavistic state; it provides it increasing power to control and to coerce the natural environment but also the human constituents; sometimes for the benefit of the latter, but also, often, in the course of chasing towards overpowering abstractions and promptings. These which issue out of that amalgam - the nationality - which

is history, culture whatever else, as well as organized self-interest. Of these, culture is the more open to corruption, insanity and the inertia of habit. There more over is also the logic of power itself - - like water it is bound to find its own way, which may be destructive of all fragile experiencing.

What I see is, that, for peace in the heart (and so in the human future) to be lasting, it has to be derived from age old, if renewed renovated sentiments, images, symbols; they must capture the mind of the world community, must cut across all kind of boundaries - - religious or any other. There will be conflict of sentiments, of the broader and the narrower. There is also this added difficulty, that to the traditional or old, the new seems all mundane because the sacred in it is not recognized simply because it is in the contemporary garb. This calls for imagination.

All the same, one can foresee, that, all kinds of creeds, racial groups, and other natural or unnatural divisions will, with the growth and evolution of mind, through contact - - the familiarity, but also by conscious reflection undergo a slow but steady transformation; one can foresee that with the knowledge of self, of literature and of other arts, religions and the so-called races cannot be as sectarian as of old. Changes are indeed already afoot, a kind of liberalism, pliability or flexibility to moral vision is bound to arrive. Given inner knowledge a set of firmer sentiments come into play - - these which have synthesized normative realities with the nexus of the new but plain natural facts.

What I must, at this moment point out is, that, the so-called aesthetic and creative values, do not follow (in time) after man's basic needs (whatever these might be) are satisfied; so one must better not say that 'one hopes these will also be given attention' This division, of needs and functions, from the creative or aesthetic energies has in fact been fatal to civilization creating a schizophrenic split. The creative, or any other dimension must form one seamless whole, or the total condition comes to grief. The man of any time, any - - especially so of today, needs a creative attitude to the functional so to keep his spirit whole; the matter is one of style, and style is what matters. Most values are the children of the creative imagination, whether these pertain to morals or to the market place. Even seemingly more mundane things cannot exist, one at the cost of the other, in separation. Skills must not be reduced to the purely functional or the decorative - - nor be rarified and sundered from life values; this way they cannot have much meaning, cogency or power.

The quality of man's life? - - it has only partly to do with a kingdom of things, important as they are, but rather more to do with arrangements between things and thoughts, between behavior and self-images; which images are we furthering? - - do these lead to the growth of self, or conflict between self and the self of the community? It appears there has been a breakdown of such understanding between self and community, and vacuum between communities. It is not merely a question of satisfying man's basic needs at once - - unless at times of famine and war - - but of satisfying them how. Man lives and satisfies his needs through multiple levels of being, and not in isolation and piecemeal; it is great simplification to plan from the outside, or from up top, the human good.

Values, related as they are to meaning arise out of reflection; out of guiding the course of one's life in the light of considered ends. Such consideration certainly entails a gap in time, between desire and fulfilment, the very name for civilization.

Now there is this paradox in nature or historical time - - the great mental revolutions which have transformed man's outer environments and also inner understandings, have not fully brought to a higher point of perfection the refinement in his motivations - - I would not say emotions; - - poverty of culture is what will kill man as much as lack of bread - - by self-disgust, or by contempt towards neighbour. Revolution must go deeper; it must attempt to articulate, in metaphor or through meditation and forms of art or craft the self-surpassing spirit of man. The insights of seers and thinkers have been neglected, they can do much to rescue the individual from oblivion or self-contempt. Self values are not created by taking thought alone, but by immersing in processes of living. Values are certainly clarified and preserved by critical thought; critical thought however must not usurp the place of the values themselves; values such as I have in mind exact sanctity, whereas on the other hand scientific thought demands rather more of a deference or patient hearing. But, in this context, any thought which has become tool, is distinct from the inner nature of poetic metaphor, religious mass, visual image, and the live gestures or customs which are designed to provide intrinsic satisfaction and strength.

That must be the essential Pattern, if human prospects are to be such as ensure dignity for mankind. But a variety of patterns such an overall total pattern must guarantee - - for instance in the ensuring of the unexpected, which is the name for creativity. It must ensure difference, choice, idiosyncrasy, in the proliferation and the extension of values, in the experiences of worth, in the variations and the richnesses of human existence. Any social order or social ideology must make room for this search into patterns no matter if they are formed of the same essential constituents.

But the dynamic Pattern which allows these differences, must remain fixed, as the fundamental premise. This itself must not be called into question; or chaos, anarchy else the closed society are in prospect on the horizon.

What of traditional values today? If affirmation of these means unrevised belief systems then one must say no to them. But modern science - - as enquiry - - as I already said and is as we know, itself not so modern, being refined commonsense it is perennial; what we must ensure is that the tradition of enquiry must be made safe through the agencies of law and legislature - - enquiry into nature and human fact and event. But, I repeat enquiry is one facet of man's soul, the others are experiencing; the becoming and being, through experience of value, of self-surpassing, imaginative or actual psychic encounters. Are these last traditional attitudes? Yes and no; our job is to ensure a full creative tradition; the tradition that renews itself, even the tradition of science, science is not without shadows, is not omniscient or omnipresent. However, a combination or 'religion' and science is a fruitless occupation; what is needed is a redefinition, in contemporary terms of the integrating experience - - which is emotional and so on rather than in merely being in conflict with the

work or findings of science or the objective method. Many religious people today are outside the fold of organized religions, and to say that they are merely ethical will not quite do; their experience of value, their passions as perhaps their morals pertain to and are born in an awareness of the totality of world or life experience, and not merely in response to a limited social life.

A good bit of what I have prescribed pertains to long-term goals - - which are not within the fulfillment of a life time. But that is why these are termed religious or teleological, the telos that man projects into the future, to give his immediate life more meaning and direction than these given to dumb and deaf creature. The long term is likely to be ignored because easily forgotten. But then man is the memory binder; living in and out of time he lives by incentives which are not sensory, not immediate, not present; he relates himself to goals - - whether sane or insane which are 'otherworldly so to speak'. Man is not a creature of time alone; a purely practical society catering to common needs and so on is likely to be a limited one and a failure even as the old ones were, living pathologically in reveries and fantasy; it will be so because man's true nature demands vision but which channel is denied to him too often.

Under a given scheme of things, placed in the very heart of the casual, physical processes, born of them, a creature of them, as of the subsequently developed institutions and historical accidents, humankind has, as we know by virtue of a cortical development, luck, chance, and choice become independent to an extent - - a factor to reckon with, in his own unfolding. His conscience and consciousness are born of his reaction to and reflection on environments. Thus ideas and ideation, and no matter in what forms these are cast become his most vital mental property, levers for readjusting or readapting to his physical circumstance or social behavior. Human future, that of man, is linked to seminal ideas, and to their force of synthesizing or unifying disparate, contradictory and wasteful activities. Ideas are in turn the result of the will to freedom (not freedom from life), the struggle on a transmuted cultural plane of the struggle for survival. Purely technological devices or blue prints are only pale shadows of such ideas; ideas have a content- - and the most important of them are of a personal meaning, and which in turn entails fateful or fatal involvement. Both the personal and the impersonal are equally fused in the total dynamics. The man of the future will have to recombine in himself both the inward and the outward vision, both self-distrust and self-command.

Man, as we can well imagine has been some sort of a slave for a good part of his existence in one or other meanings of that term. Man is free in some senses today, and he is not really a slave to machines only an addict; but he can be found to be a slave to machines of organizations and gigantic institutions - - there then is the crux, the root of the helplessness, as the barrenness or poverty of his being of the difficulty of achieving a humane soul. But with ideas which guide the spirit and which in turn guides action, there is a slim possibility of partial salvation, collectively or at least at the individual level.

Between the Sacred and the Disembodied: The Consciousness of the Moderns

Professor Dr. Sridhar Rajeswaran

Lead-in: This paper is in 2 parts. The first is aimed at justifying the choice of the subjects, then locating within history, within constitutive conditions, within the definitive of time and space, certain poets generically termed the Moderns, show how their aesthetics had forbears from whom they drew, was also contemporaneous simultaneously by virtue of being a by-product of the ethos, hence governed by the dictates of the larger world in which they indwelt, which they negotiated and which they echoed in their writings. The second part expands, elaborates and deliberates upon the ideas touched in order to arrive at the larger rationale that underpinned their writing, that determined the aesthetic, and the consciousness it embodied. Such consciousness being disembodied for the one and for the other, having issues with the notions of the sacred mandates a search a re-search that may be said to have its defining aim as seeking a value, worthiness in precisely such re-presentations from our own times. The fact that these representations have been traversed many times, from many subject positions, from different contexts of reception, adds a body of extra-territorial knowledge, brimming with new meanings and newer directions to the ideas and the aesthetic that unfolds them. This body of knowledge incessantly insists on a forward glance towards history even as we are impelled backwards to the future. The past, the pastness of the past, the presence of that pastness, the trace (the indications of an absence that define a presence in otherwords the present is as the present only through the presence of a past that then a present) the link between tradition and the individual, the bridge between tradition and the modern which such forays have established correspondences between/ in-between make it indispensable to any body of knowledge in a given time and space or otherwise, especially if one is to ever forge links between imprisoned ancestors and liberated grand-children. This paper has a patterning that is non-linear as the need to establish continuities has been privileged over all else and this has been achieved, it is hoped, by the inter-textual and inter-personal weaving in and weaving out.

Part- I

"I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,

From those strong Feet that followed, followed after,
 But with unhurrying chase,
 And unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
 They beat—and a Voice beat
 More instant than the Feet—
 All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.”

(The Hound of Heaven, By Francis Thompson)

The invocation being self-explicatory, I begin with the ideas that I had advanced in my abstract. I had chosen to read Yeats, Eliot, Hopkins, Auden and Camus by immersing them in their times, in their respective constitutive conditions, in a spatiality that that may be generically termed the disembodied 20th century, a 20th century whose disembodied consciousness was itself a by-product of a degeneration of ‘Romantic’ values that had been haunting it to a passion for over three centuries, aptly culminating in the existentialist questions of The Moderns having lost their pivotal centre sometime in the past betwixt the two - a romantic imagination that suffered the contradictions of the oppositions between culture and Nature for the one and due to the predicament that besotted the great Victorians, a reason that was caught between issues of creation and evolution, one dead another powerless to be born, for the other.

Confused around questions of God, God talk and the absent sacred in life, the human was reeling from the vacuum of its non- presence/ its inability to presence itself (itself also refers to ‘Gender of God’ questions!). It could no more practice the deferrals of the earlier masters or postpone the inevitable need to negotiate it, as times and the events denied it the allowance to abdicate its responsibility and fortunately for once the times had begotten artists who did not lack the responsibility and more importantly believed in that accountability for the lives and the times to engender an aesthesis against the grain.

Gone was the complacent position when artists had made their art continue in vain pursuit in the established comfort level of a compartmentalised existence seeking succour or solace with either renouncing oneself or basking in the created glory of carefully constructed alternative paradigms for reality, or with equanimity creating a convenient philosophical speculative theory to hang contradictions and thus gain placebos. The new set of protagonists quizzed, queried and virtually undertook a quest and what emerged with such quizzing was the reality of the absence of the sacred and the fecund in all its nakedness and also the realisation of the belief that it could unlike the earlier times decide to investigate the very horns of the dilemma, that confronted its predecessors. It is to bear testimony to this dilemma the inscription was taken recourse to at the beginning of this foray and which finds purchase as an aesthetic deflection in spite of God and God Talk in that poem purporting a rather tame and conventional arrival for the poet.

Their strife, search and inferences were underscored by the logic that privileged that moment in time as that moment in cultural history that could see the redefining of a number of issues, aided by certain critical forays of monumental significance, which they had played a role in announcing. i.e., Formalism, Structuralism, and Marxist modes of analyses, all

marking points in a continual process of evolutionary thought that may have said to have begun with the creation of the new binary (Nature: Culture) in the 16-17th centuries and which would after the world had seen chronotopic shifts and moved beyond still stretch into the worlds of posts and then the worlds of the post post posts.

This moment in cultural history had its institutions, Language and Literature redefined through the process-motion of art that engaged in a dialectical relationship with life, and as it was a fulcrum on mutual bases the engendered theory did not purport contrarily. In other words it was true to the maxim that if art was a mimetic first order ideological construct, such theory as was birthed was a natural second order ideological, a veritable tool. It is reasonable to allude to the fact that nowhere before was there this perfect concord between text and theory that pulsed history on art’s own terms. It determined the times for the times and for posterity was able of proffering that look back into the condition of life from a latter day vantage point. Readings into this past have been different, have been in variance, to some it has been Modern and to others merely *angst* governed and truncated, but the point is, this is precisely its obvious victory, being an ‘originary’ innucleated chronotope that can be spliced open, without fears of a limiting aesthetic conception or aesthetic achievement, an harmonious or contrapuntal cultural melody.

In short, this consciousness that evolved may be termed disembodied but is modern, is of the moderns and as it sought to correct also the pitfalls of history, is worthy of attention, especially in a world of a reversed order of the sacred and the profane.

“A woman can be proud and stiff
 When on love intent;
 But Love has pitched his mansion in
 The place of excrement;
 For nothing can be sole or whole
 That has not been rent.” (Crazy Jane Talks With The Bishop, W B Yeats)

If history is a cruel teacher, art punishes. In Yeats it is Edmund Dulac’s Centaur poised on its hoofs monitoring the Rape of Leda, the annunciation of the Greek World. In Eliot we are virtually king priest, mad chorus and martyr, a bunch of juvenile delinquents, soldiers/ tempters in a room full of firecrackers armed with a given match-box and governed by a specific instruction not to strike it and make the world a Wasteland. We do precisely this to the reconstructed/ re-worlded World and so also travels from Chaucer and his structures a couple of millennia back to meet a Tiresius. Camus journeys to meet his Sisyphus. Auden ‘waltzes across the tightrope as if there were no death but even more importantly, even above the absence of fear, afraid of being denied that hope of falling down’, Pound pounds the worlds through the cantos and Hopkins is caught in a sprung rhythm a deliberate choice to show levels and layers of tension through the internal movement of art itself named here as linguistic worlds, being four times removed by locale, by faith, by language by country - The Windhover being a classic example.

Whatever the travels, they were all actually initiated three centuries back and the change was ushered in by that moment in time when the landscape got transformed with the entry of a simple discovery. A New World, a New World Order in art, a fourth Revolution the Romantic, impacted, impelled by the other three. This levelled rightly so the earlier formalisms, classicisms and intellectualism, of the Neoclassical Age - that had a discord between form/content and constitutive conditions, by speaking a simpler though not simplistic language to engender the literature for the commoner but unfortunately also brought in hierarchies negatively through fancy and imagination, as all children were equal but some more equal than the others, it is not necessary to carry coal to Newcastle and so no elaboration is required to underscore the point made.

What is sought to be studied thus is the period that began with the inventions and discoveries of the spinning Jenny and the Steam Engine, the three Revolutions, Industrial, American declaration of Independence 1776, and the tragedy of the French Revolution of 1789; and then the repeat of History as farce with Napoleon Bonaparte and the science that falsified Biblical Truths and left a poet crucified on absent morality, to the fin d' siècle period and then the repeat of the three revolutions, this time as The Irish Easter Revolution of 1916, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the failed German Revolution of 1919. Revolutions that were farcical repeats of history that yet again fought for Liberty Equality and Fraternity from exploitation - Freedom from the Tsars and their oppression, Freedom from the coloniser and His ('His' because colonialism is read here as a masculine construct) hegemony and the concomitant World Wars, Freedom for the citizens of the world to unite.

If this be the story of Life, if this be of the tales of the indwellers, the story of the Sea, of art, of the reflecting Mirror and its re-presentations may well be said to have begun in a ruptured or fissured state even with the Romantic age, that art revolution engendered by the three revolutions of life mentioned above. This consciousness too may be said have been if not spliced at least divided in itself as life too was pulled in different directions, drawn on the one side between culture, its new modes of production, its materiality as opposed to on the other side that was Mother, Mother- Nature that was till then a solo fundamental principle in impacting, determining life and lifestyles. The change had begun. Equipment replaced the tool even as the hand that controlled the means of production gyrated to the mechanised music of the machine, the pace was set by the latter as opposed to the earlier instance when it belonged to the arm. A process that slowly degenerates in value, a simple example being the story of Industry, The God that failed. What started as a beautiful discovery gave the world nothing; to the Individual oppression, to the collective exploitation, and to some Nations that empowerment to erode the Economic Base through the privileging of Superstructural Politics in certain instances aligning even Religion to it by extricating it from its rightful place the third arm of the triangle - Culture, and thereby fill the world with all kinds of hegemonies. Humanity could no more to look to the benefits of Science and its discoveries, its benign possibilities were twisted by hegemonies to produce nothing else other than colossal waste-arms and armaments that left in its wake Death, Mayhem and Destruction. So three centuries

later the moderns arrive to be caught between 'the raw and the cooked', to be caught between 'lack and supplements' the confused legacy of earlier times they had to engage, lock-horns with and correct. Their travels into literary landscapes, into the landscapes of memory were all to find out what went wrong and when did it go wrong so that they can postulate newer beginnings, unfortunately from no vantage point other than their marginalised status, perhaps the reason for the disenchantment perchance the disembodied consciousness. The order had changed:

The future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

(A Prayer for My Daughter, W B Yeats)

All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

(Easter 1916, William Butler Yeats)

Auden too puts this poignantly in his epitaph to Yeats

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,

And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

(In Memory of W. B. Yeats, W.H. Auden)

If this symbolized the times the aesthesis that memorializes and responds, the practitioners are echoed in the lines:

You were silly like us; your gift survived it all:
The parish of rich women, physical decay,
Yourself. Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

(In Memory of W. B. Yeats, W.H. Auden)

Part II

This split in Romantic consciousness had occurred because the Romantic imagination in its historical development failed to maintain its organic link with the world outside of the poetic self. As a result, the votaries retired into an aestheticism or tried to survive in a world whose nature they did not successfully intuit or fully comprehend. Hence they built up their own notions, substituting illusions and ideas for the solid reality without.

It was particularly important for the Romantic imagination to maintain itself in close organic contact with the outside world; otherwise its expression of poetry would suffer.

One may attempt a slight elaboration here to iterate the idea from the world of verse itself. Though it is not possible to do it comprehensively by including also the aesthetic of other poets too, given its expanse. Right in the beginning of even Wordsworth the Rural Urban and the Forest City dichotomy was accentuated.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours.

(The World is Too Much with Us, William Wordsworth)

cries Wordsworth but what does his nature hold other than a mere Solitary Reaper to behold or a later-day Hudson's 'Sapphire Gatherer'

single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;

(The Solitary Reaper, William Wordsworth)

Or himself wandering lonely as a cloud to spot
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze

(Daffodils, William Wordsworth)

Lucy's footsteps are Grey and the imprints are effaced

The footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank,
And further there were none.

(Lucy Gray, William Wordsworth)

Anyway amongst the mountains he saw her

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
A maid whom there were none to praise

And very few to love

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
She lived unknown, and few could know

(Lucy poems, William Wordsworth)

She ceases to be, she is in her grave and the difference is to him the poet alone. If the aesthetic reduces the city from its utopian space paving the way for later day dystopias the forest becomes a place cut off from all else, at best a place for a hermit who has lost all touch with reality, notwithstanding the city continuously eating into the Forest. The forest that was an utopian space to begin with at least for the hermit, the high priest of nature but cut off from the buzz of life offering thus a partial validity is at best heterotopic.

Without the constant and buffeting presence of the 'other', the imagination would collapse and get ensnared in its own structures resulting in not merely a poetic falsehood, but the Romantic poet's dejection ode.

Both these results are seen to be present in Victorian verse. The best of Tennyson rings slightly hollow to the ears, or at least sounds a dreadful monotone, because the imagination's encounter with the world somehow always transforms itself into noble sentiments and picturesque landscapes. If 'In Memoriam' succeeds, it is because of the insistence of its lyrical 'I' and its exquisite masterly display of the excellences of craft. But the general body of Tennyson's work imperfectly transforms the solipsism of perception into an art that might erect itself as a paradigm for its encounter with reality, the reality itself being unavailable as a whole.

Barefooted came the beggar maid
Before the king Cophetua.
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
'She is more beautiful than day.'
Cophetua swore a royal oath:
'This beggar maid shall be my queen!

(The Beggar Maid, Alfred Lord Tennyson)

The poetry of Matthew Arnold sounds more intimate and honest because even while he dreaded the present reality and would have like his own 'Scholar Gypsy' to flee the times, he acknowledged its presence in all its horror, boredom and bleakness. He could not, however, successfully pierce through it. His imagination recoiled from its 'torpedo touch' and was therefore unable to sustain even such aesthetic victories as a momentary encounter with a portion of it - realised epiphanically - would have secured. At times, he did extend his poetic self into reality and thereby created successful poetry, forming his perceptions into a pattern around a point of achieved meaning. This point of meaning could have been culled out by a fragment of childhood memory, by the sight of the sea on a moon-drenched night, by a remembered tree - childhood images which typify Blake's innocence, and which provided

him with a centre from which he could articulate meaning. Yet, religious passion and perception of nature pulled each other down, and in the event of their mutual failure, he was left crucified on poetry and morality.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

(Dover Beach, Matthew Arnold)

He deserted his imagination. He turned critic.

Tennyson did not possess such a centre, a point of achieved meaning, and even his memories of Arthur Hallam, his use of myth and legend served to emphasise his intense lyricism on the one hand and his predilections for smooth measured numbers and composed comfortable forms of experience on the other. But even Arnold did not often achieve poetic success. His own structures were not in contact with the 'other' often and ensnared him, thus, like his own Thomas Gray, he could not speak out. Like Coleridge before him, who had despaired in his 'Ode to Dejection', "I see not feel how beautiful they are", he ultimately remained separated from reality. He did not retire from the world but his Empedocles renounced it instead, convinced of the essential suffering of the poetic condition. As regards Browning his

God's in His heaven-
All's right with the world!

(Pippa Passes, Robert Browning)

The suffering due to an uncongenial reality was an unforeseen development in the history of Romanticism. The extreme distaste and fear, which the reality outside the poetic self inspired in it, came to be, when the touch of empirical science turned the world and reality into incomprehensible phenomena. A further factor may be said to have been at play and this in the in the context of the Younger romantics and the baton which they handed out to their illustrious progeny, the great Victorians. Nature from being instructive was reduced to mere object of beauty, a beauty that had even negative connotations as in Keats's, "lustrous eyes". A closer look at his Ode to the Nightingale reveals a solipsism of perception that somehow erases the negative capability in the reader to merely enjoy the beauty of his verse forgetting the times and or the absent poetic commitment and poetic responsibility. To elaborate, the Wordsworthian, "aching joys and dizzy raptures" of The Prelude are transmogrified as 'heart aches and drowsy numbnesses'. In spite of the melodious lines,

The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

a quality that may be evidenced in the great Victorian Master Tennyson, and choosing to fly on the viewless wings of poesy", Keats is yet "charioted by Bacchus and his pards", it is wine that underscores the inebriation. Further, so many are the words that reek a negativity, spelling a kind of escapism, that stench of fear driven flight has not merely biographical ramifications but eventually marginalises the very poetic voice.

Aches, drowsy numbness, pains, a sense hemlock drunk, emptied, dull opiate (dull the very opium?) to the drains, lethe-wards, sunk, envy. If this be the words that make the intangible tangible the nebulous is made palatable in the very first word of the second stanza, O. The beaded bubbles of the blushing Hippocrene, with beaded bubbles winking at the brim, is to enable him to leave the world unseen drunk. Blind mouths purple stained fade, dissolve forget the The weariness, the fever, and the fret, where youth suffering palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs, grow pale, spectre-thin, dies; a world full of sorrow And leaden-eyed despairs, a world:

Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. Is the poet awake or asleep
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

And Fled is that music. Such Solipsism returns in his compatriot the rebel, a rebel who whimpers.

Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

(Ode to the West Wind, Percy Bysshe Shelley)

Even as the Romantics posited such powers for the imaginative faculty, empirical science was developing its counter-claims. It had not developed, however, in such a fashion as would force the poets to vindicate it or stand in opposition to it. In fact, the poets allied themselves to science, with Wordsworth defining poetry almost as an attribute of science - "the impassioned expression in the countenance of all science" and Shelley showing keen interest in scientific experimentation. But the hostility of a world touched with science, towards poetry, was even then lamented by Keats who was "forlorn" and tolled back to a reality where Newtonian physics was spoiling his rainbow. This hostility, hardened as science, progressed rapidly in the middle years of the 19th century, denaturing nature and falsifying Biblical truths. Small wonder then that Arnold, who had in his boyhood been acquainted with Wordsworth and his divinised nature, felt the weight of the world. For "nature by ceasing to be divine had ceased to be human."

Thus when the Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes came to write, they had no reason to remain with the world which was attractive neither in itself nor in such images of it in poetry as sought to ruminate over it and moralise it into a state of middle-class blessedness and piety. Their revolt against life was a historical inevitability, the moralism of Ruskin leading to the aestheticism of Pater. It is surely no accident that Pater was Ruskin's pupil and a very devout one too. The turning away from life, as a modification of the Empedoclean renunciation of it, developed the notion of the isolated suffering poetic self as a necessary

condition for the attainment of poetic truth. But with the Aesthetes, the suffering remained a gesture at large, a pose, so that its reality was handed down to the twentieth century, rather, as a wilful perversion of the bardic manner. The bardic discursive poetic voice, for its part, survived Tennyson in the voice of Kipling and less attractively in the verse of Newbolt, Watson and Austin.

It were these warped forms of Romanticism that T.S. Eliot, like Yeats, and others went out to correct. In the face of the flaccid, formless and weak derivative Romantic verse swamping the poetic atmosphere of the times, Eliot postulated new terms for poetry which would realise it as a taut, forceful utterance, emblematic of the times. He stated that "meaning in poetry was by the way" and the pattern achieved by the poem was its mainstay. *The Wasteland* seemed to confirm his credo, and I.A. Richards welcomed it and proclaimed that Eliot had written for the times, making his art in a context of non-belief and forming it by an immersion in the destructive element. If poetry could not achieve meaning, it could henceforth at least successfully record the failure of it, pattern it and demonstrate its own efficiency as an aesthetic structure. But Eliot went on to impute meanings, especially in his later poems, alienating craft from art - both of which need to exist in a contrapuntal relationship. This split in consciousness resulted in a sensibility which was broken in three ways. The self, the art and the craft constituted the three apexes in a triangle with like charges, that never would 'be', to consolidate boundaries. He won for his art victories in terms of craft, but this craft failed to sustain the self, the text and the world at large, for, it had been made with something more than the art of poetry in mind, to specify, the Kierkegaardian opposite - religion.

This problem of a disembodied consciousness has been the subject of philosophic as well as aesthetic speculation in the Twentieth century. An interesting counter-point, in this instance, to Eliot is the French novelist - Albert Camus. Camus expounded an existentialist nihilism, which manifested itself in notions such as the human in exile, the irrationality of all experience and an abiding metaphysical anguish. Camus's art sought to create appropriate forms for this nihilism, but did not therefore seek solace in either the experience of nihilism or the art, which was produced out of it. Camus remained actively engaged with the world till his death, campaigned against the death penalty and wrote of the dynamics of power and rebellion vis-à-vis history. Perhaps Camus's experiences as a partisan during World War II accounts for his equanimity in the face of meaninglessness. However, a further factor may be discerned to be at work here. Camus's days as a partisan constituted the said portions of a mentality the unsaid of which was equally fundamental to his politicisation of existential anguish.

Camus's silence over Algeria allowed him to negotiate his existential concerns in a space which was his spiritual home and which he did not wish to surrender to the oppositional imperatives of nationalist politics. Eliot was in search of a home and a tradition but his choices in this respect had to be vindicated by religion whereas for Camus, his location in Algeria seemed a vindication of his nihilism as well as his engagement with society. The point is Camus's own Algerian experience, in the context of his dumb, deaf and crippled mother is simultaneously a sibilant's participation in a relation that suffers oppression as well as exploitation. His partisan war experience was the positive personal

counterpoint to his artistic/aesthetic expediency. The point is if art suffers a positive mutation, life is tempered by that art. Call it whatever, this curious alchemy works to subvert the logic of reality in absolute and profoundest terms. Personal anxieties tempered by cultural effects reverse the terms of referential merits. Existentialism, which though had its seeds rooted in an awareness of personal oppression, becomes the order of a collective, specifically the community, while the exploitative order of the other that is the world re-enters representation in classic Yeatsian terms of 'impersonality'. Because of these mutual bases it is reasonable to assume that the *Summer in Algiers* on the one hand produced a Sisyphus in art and a partisan soldier in life.

Perhaps an instructive contrast can be drawn here between Eliot's Tiresias and Camus's hero - Sisyphus. While it is usual to read the myth of Sisyphus rolling up the stone as an index of purposelessness and arbitrary human endeavour, it is equally possible to discern, in this tirelessly repeated action, moments of epiphany and liberation. For, that moment, when the stone begins its descent, ushers in a momentary freedom and joy, a sense of release, before the labour of Sisyphus may begin again. There is a constant return to labour and life in Camus, with work alone providing the certainty Eliot looked for in religion. The wryness of this philosophic stance has to also do with geography, with the lay of the land in Algeria - its Mediterranean stillness and poetry.

It can be seen how Eliot opted out of history, out of the mainstream of English poetry, if his poetic career is seen in the perspective afforded by *The Four Quartets*. What is sought to be postulated through the words, opting out of history, is this fact of Eliot's inability to engender and announce. His red rock shows fear in a handful of dust but it is only an enunciation of a state of mind that had failed to interlock with the developmental arm, the state of progress. This being, for the other it failed to reconstruct - in effect aiding- the collapse of an art that swayed under the weight of its own history due to its dependence on / for its relevance to religion. *The Quartets* arch over the entire corpus of his work in such a manner that the earlier work can be read as attempting to attain a poetic maturity - one that it embodies. *The Quartets* make manifest his aesthetic dialogue as a dialogue instituted to solve the problem of discourse. All those injunctions for poetry to necessarily dislocate language into meaning can be seen to be the result of a desire and an anxiety to reveal and perpetuate the poetic word - not for art's sake. *The Wasteland*, embodying an almost pathological inability to communicate, appears as a record of the human condition reduced to the horror of incoherence, indicated by the various juxtapositions of mutually jarring tones. Eliot in his notes has remarked, "What Tiresias sees is the poem". But, in actuality, what Tiresias sees is not the point, since he appears a mere aesthetic device to unify the fragmented parts of the poet's vision.

This disembodied consciousness prevails in the tongueless protagonist, and consequently, his attempts at genuine utterance merely stir up the brooding chaos into an air of expectancy. *The Wasteland* thus requires *The Quartets* for its completion. *The Quartets*

on the other hand, with their search for an authentic word or words, "the complete conson dancing together", registers the earlier attempts as false beginnings.

Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it.

(Little Gidding)

The specifically religious nature of the solution the *Quartets* arrive at finally decides the issue. The problem of words and structures in poetry requires the validity of faith and revealed truth, resting on individual choice and acceptance, to exist. This thought gets crystallized in *Murder in the Cathedral* ending for Eliot, and unfortunately, only for him, his circumnavigation. Yet, the Cathedral echoes failure and the insistence on faith carry in and through it the heave of that spiritual exhaustion which tries desperately to align itself to privately held belief. As the Knights circle Thomas Beckett, in order to murder him, the play's Chorus takes up this cry of desperation:

Clear the air! Clean the sky! Wash the wind! Take stone from
Stone and wash them.
The land is foul; the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves
defiled with blood. . .

We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean, united to
Supernatural vermin,
It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is
defiled,
But the world that is wholly foul.

It is not surprising that in this "wholly foul" world, Eliot looked to a personal religion, rather than to the authority of the Anglican church, to console him vis-à-vis the horrors of incoherence that underwrite modern life.

With Hopkins, the personal expediency, which resulted in a split self failing to realize itself, due to the divided nature of consciousness, remained private; with the absence of distinct and definitive public spaces for the poet as well as the priest, itself a consequence of an exercised option. Yet this option did permit negotiation within the internal movement of the aesthetic, however personal the dialectics. (And here Hopkins is akin to Yeats, but there are significant differences.) Historical essentialism however is beyond this and thereby overrides such considerations, so if it is to be made amenable to negotiation, it has to perforce an interaction, which by itself, should partake in the anxieties of the times. In this instance, it would have meant advocating the devolution of certain power structures, specifically the Church-State nexus. The absence of choice assumes a more powerful conflict that gets lost in the metonymy of structures - inscape in stress and sprung rhythm, finger posts that mark the failure to interlock with process. Hopkins, though, is more at home in the Eliotian universe, only Eliot's negotiation of spiritual crisis in an age of materialism proved far more tame than that of the poet-priest.

Unlike Eliot, who was unimpressed and uninspired by the warped forms of Romanticism which confronted him in the early Twentieth century, Yeats worked at these forms, only to slowly but surely disengage himself from their hold, to reach a vantage point of his own from where he could re-enter the tired, worn aesthetic and crystallise it into appropriate structures. Imbued as he was with the awe and mystery of the universe, with "traditional sanctity and loveliness" - a veritable romantic, who, in his youth and under the influence of his father, had accepted the Aesthete's version of the Romantic credo (Poet as lone figure in search of truth)- Yeats sought to remake poetry in an essentially Romantic context. That is, he wished to preserve the exalted status of poetry and the poet, envisioned by the great romantics from Blake onwards. Now he put to good use the lessons learnt at those very schools of poetry, he was now also ready to leave them behind. His poetic baptism at the hands of Rhymers helped him reconstruct poetry as craft. His Irish descent put him in touch with a body of oral and folk literature, whose qualities of immediacy of impact, starkness of expression and an integrated vision of life, formed and sustained by a communal ethos, he wished to emulate.

By thus perfecting his craft in the context of a linguistic reality that could be made operative in universal conditions, Yeats armed himself against the dangers inherent in Romanticism, which was prone to realise the imagination's activity in solipsism. Thus, even as he moved away from the fairyland of his earlier poems he retained his technical virtuosity and worked to carry the Romantic sense of vocation into the opposing world of reality. He sought a wilful engagement with reality, confronting it with conflict or resolution, as the occasion might allow, but at all times, in terms of the poem - the achieved work of art. In his modern version of Romanticism, the poetic self would constantly confront the world but secure its meaning on its own behalf, which meant that poetry would be forever made and remade in response to the arbitrariness of the self. But since the self was held in place by the other eternity of a world that was also race, the language of poetry, its expressive form, was rendered complicit with that irreducible human core in which soul and race cohere.

The beggar and nobleman unproblematically brought together as icons of the nation as well as complete and central poetic symbols constitute the coherence, the humanism. In other words the creditable humanism of Camus for which he is remembered is homologous to the achieved poeticism of Yeats. The former, while intimating human goodness was bound by the conditions of its existence within the confines of history. The latter, even as he remained a poet, was able to transcend and precisely so because of his art and the confines of time.

By thus developing his art to constitute structures, adequate and yet transcendent to the reality outside, Yeats did not allow his art to serve meaning or truth. Then again, by maintaining his art in close association with the human interior he did not let it assume a glacial autonomy of its own.

His aesthetic was suited for the times, since it showed how privateness of vision could realise itself in a choricity of utterance. Such a merging of private and public voices, the one requiring the other for its articulatory power, meant that both esoteric meaning and public rhetoric appeared transformed, through this choricity, into poetry. The question of the public voice in poetry is a point well answered, since one of the constant pressures on the poet is to make him assume meaning for society at large. Yeats's poetry demonstrates how, given the nature of the times, public themes had to be made private, if they had to signify at all, even as it showed how private meanings, if they are to remain as poetry must submit to the exigencies of the craft.

Yeats's representative worth gets re-established further with reference to the inemulcable poetic sensibility that contains the self, the art and the craft. The efficacy of such a poetic for the times has never been seriously challenged, except for a brief period when the Auden generation sought to align poetry with history. The carefully balanced choice between life and work was seen by these poets, as at times, being fulfilled in the world of happenings and wars. Yeats on being asked for a war poem, had answered, "we have no gift to set a statesman right". But the poets of the 1930's felt that poetic integrity had to be compromised or at least re-stated in the face of the anxieties of history. However, poetic integrity, had it dared posit for itself such powers in a sustained manner, would have had to come to terms with the confounding of history by notions such as 'the historicity of text' and 'the textuality of history'. Yet, these young men of the 1930's felt that art, in a very real sense, had to discover values that were not purely subjective and individualistic, but objective and social. The days of despair, beginning with irresolute wanderings on moonlit beaches down to disgust over "an old bitch gone in the tooth", "a botched civilization" were now seen as having ended. What they did not realise was that art does not enter history and serve the times or change the world, but exists as a statement, in which, the general and the particular cohere and in which a kind of timelessness and history merge. Their postulations for art did in fact gradually move away from a concern over its public image, a process evident in the poetic career of W.H.Auden.

Auden did not make a volte-face overnight. Earlier he had argued of art "the only thing it must be is attendant, the only thing it must not, independent". But even then he was sensitive to the process of art and was aware of its strange inhumanity, as is evident in *Musee d'Beaux Arts*, *The Composer* and *New Year Letters*. Yet, if he persisted in defining it in terms of social use, it was as a result of the pressures of the times. The anxieties of the times were very real and the politic nature of the times impressed notions of liberty, freedom and justice on the individual and, for a time, communicated their sense of urgency.

By the late 1930s, however, Auden is found shrugging his immediate past away as that "low dishonest decade."

His *The Sea and the Mirror* reverses the Romantic poetic and argues that its magical alchemical power could turn in on itself, not as a result of the imagination failing it, but

because, at some point, reality would break in and shatter the poet's magic ring. The basic assumption of art as enchantment, perversely tainting reality with its own charms is, therefore, to be countered by humility to be displayed by art when it retires into, what Auden shows to be a narrow circle, serving as a mirror that reflects negatively. This can be attributed to the times prior to Auden's disillusionment with totalitarian governments.

If the artist were to merely turn his powers of apprehension as regards the world, the world in the period of silence to which the artist assents would form itself in all its contradictions. Its proof of incompleteness will not be disconcerting or painful, since the artist, in his humility, is aware that,

Between, shall-I and I-will lies
The lion's mouth, whose hunger
No metaphors can fulfil

(The Sea and the Mirror)

Art therefore does not make things happen. It accepts that the truth of things could be intuited - "the smiling secret" known in "the backyard" but never uttered. For to speak would sink the artist into "unmeaning abysses". The smiling secret will have to remain unquoted with the realisation that,

All the rest is silence
On the other side of the wall
And the silence ripeness
And the ripeness all.

(The Sea and the Mirror)

Auden's aesthetic posits for art a limited situation but declares it to be the only one available to an artist, if he were to realize the existential nature of his situation, where he cannot evade his choices by magic but has to learn to suffer "without saying something ironic or funny about suffering". Art has to, therefore, acquire a sense of humility towards life, temper the arrogant aesthetic consciousness, and not interfere with the world's ways through magic, wanting to seduce it into change.

The limitations of art, however, are the best possible under the circumstances, since art at least forms "a wholly other life" in which "all our meanings are reversed" and perhaps it is only in its "negative image of judgement that we can possibly envisage mercy. It is just here among the ruins and the bones that we may rejoice in the perfected work which is not our own". Significantly, Auden's poetic move kindles the desire to re-pose the question of Eliot's centrality as a poet of the modern times. I. A. Richards had commended Eliot for immersing his verse in the "destructive element" and thereby engaging fitfully with the times, but here, there is a poet who not only finds an occasion for poetry in destruction but can also intuit from it a measure of grace.

Art for Auden, in the final analysis, stopped short of life; but life, Auden makes it clear can find its only term of reference, its value, negatively perhaps, but still usefully, in art. Auden almost echoes the Yeatsian aesthetic here but Yeats granted art a more dynamic role. It was not merely to reflect passively in a convex mirror, where distorted images suggest a reality that is not, a reality beyond the actual. He saw art as engaging itself in a dialectic with life and actually providing it with an image of a reality beyond and also showing it to be possible only on art's terms.

What is important to note here is that Yeats's dynamic view of art was cultivated in the context of a nationalist struggle, which brought in an additional dimension of territoriality to the aesthetic, one, which was denied to Auden. The lack of a struggle and the absence of such a central issue forced Auden to seek and sojourn in alien spaces. Always a once removed, Auden's aesthetic lacked the impending urgency that would impel it to again and again engage with reality.

References:

- Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp : Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953. Print.
- Allt, Peter and Alspach, Russell (ed). *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*. New York: Macmillan, 1957. Print.
- Arendt, Hannah (ed). *Walter Benjamin : Illuminations*. Trans. Zohn, Harry. Great Britain: Collins/Fontana Books, 1970. Print.
- Brooks, Cleanth. *The Hidden God*. San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace and Co., 1974. Print.
- Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. New York: Vintage International, 1991. Print.
- Chadwick, Charles. *Symbolism: Critical Idiom Series*. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1974. Print.
- Donoghue, Denis. *The Ordinary Universe : Soundings in Modern Literature*. London: Faber and Faber, 1968. Print.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*. London/ New York: Verso, 1995. Print.
- Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems: 1909-1962*. Calcutta: Rupa and Co., 1992. Print.
- Eliot, T.S. *Dante*. London: Faber and Faber, 1929. Print.
- Gardner, W.H. and Mackenzie, N.H. (eds). *Gerald Manley Hopkins : A Selection of His Poems*. Fourth Edition, The Society of Jesus, 1967. Print.
- Jeffares, A. Norman (ed). *Yeats's Poems*. London: Macmillan, 1989. Print.

Kermode, Frank. *The Romantic Image*. London: Routledge, 1986. Print.

Kirby, Sheelah. *The Yeats Country*. Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1962. Print.

'Marx, Karl : Selections from Das Capital', Great Books of the Western World, Volume 50, Encyclopaedia Britannica Ltd, Chicago, 1993. Print.

Marx, Karl. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983. Print.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Picador, 1992. Print.

Payne, Michael. *Reading Theory : An Introduction to Lacan, Derrida, and Kristeva*. Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1993. Print.

Press, John. *A Map of Modern English Verse*. London, Oxford. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969. Print.

Richards, I.A. *Principles of Literary Criticism*. New York: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1926. Print.

Spender, Stephen. *The Destructive Element*. Cape London: Jonathan, 1938. Print.

Stead, C K. *The New Poetic*. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964. Print.

Trilling, Lionel. 'Matthew Arnold'. New York: Meridian Books, 1955. Print.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: OUP, 1977. Print.

Negotiating the Sacred: Post-secular Configurations of Faith in Cosmopolitan, Transnational Spaces in the Poetry of Agha Shahid Ali

Prof Nishat Zaidi

Modernity is perceived as accompanied by decline, if not demise, of the sacred. It draws its suspicion of religion from the tradition of liberal rationalism, and posits secularism as the only way forward in a world defined by progress. It is projected as a self-enclosed, reified aspect of Western culture as opposed to the religious and superstitious Orient. West's obsession with secular, almost to the extent of religious creed, has led to its domination through classification of human groups and collectivities into mutually distinct entities, legitimizing its civilizing mission. However, as the postcolonial critic, Edward Said, has exposed, this switch to the secular was not an outcome of "sudden access of objective knowledge" but "a set of structures inherited from the past, secularized, redisposed, and reformed by such disciplines as philology, which in turn were naturalized, modernized, and laicized substitutes for (or versions of) Christian supernaturalism." This displacement of the usual significations of the 'secular' in Said's approach, an approach that Amir Mufti terms as 'secular criticism', is "an invitation to the crossing of boundaries—boundaries of nation, tradition, religion, race, and language - and carries the implication that the world as a whole can be the only authentic horizon of critical practice." (Mufti 2004, 4) A similar approach has been espoused by a spectrum of post-secular theorists who propose a post-secular society characterized by "the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment." (Habermas 2009:63)

In this context the paper aims to analyse the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali, a Kashmiri-Indian-American poet, to explore how in privileging his religious identity as a Muslim and at the same time 'ripping' it of eternity by replacing Islam's dogmatic register with a continued and sustained reference to the Islamic alterity, Ali paves way for a new vocabulary of the sacred, a vocabulary that problematises the secular vs sacred debates and the mutually exclusive, dichotomous positions implied therein. Going a step further, the paper argues that a 'Secular' Muslim as Agha Shahid Ali preferred to call himself, Ali's delineation of his religious identity and his position vis-à-vis the sacred may well be termed as coming very close to the post-secular position, which as Vincent Geoghegan, a post secular theorist, points out, attempts to "overcome the antinomy of secularism [and] religiosity in a manner which recognizes the strengths and weaknesses" of both. This stance towards faith not only suited Ali as a transnational poet who remained uncomfortable with the title of an exile or a refugee, and saw himself as an ambassador of his culture, it also facilitated his engagement with fears of death, separation, sorrow and grief.

"All Diasporas are unhappy but each diaspora is unhappy in its own way" posits Vijai Mishra [1]. The case of Agha Shahid Ali is no different. The topography of Ali's poetic

world is animated by 'separation's geography'. In this world of farewells and adieus, the world of transit lounges, long-distance telephone calls, and long journeys across deserts, the poet gropes to find meaning and assert identity. This struggle, however, is more complex than what it seems, for here the poet's epistemological world is challenged by the varying formulas offered by the culture of his origin [i.e. east] and the culture of his adopted land [west] whereas the poet, "a dealer in words / that mix cultures / and leave me rootless" [*Bone Sculpture*] is committed to his trade of mixing cultures.

In his Introduction to *The Ravishing DisUnties*, Ali writes, "If one writes in free verse - and one should - to subvert Western civilization, surely one should write in forms to save oneself from Western civilization?"

For himself, by writing in free verse as well as form, Ali tenaciously refuses to allow the First World/ Western civilization any overriding role in the project of identity construction the world over, a role that it has so unproblematically assigned to itself. Ali is wary of such strategic universalism which is aimed at legitimizing the ethico-political and epistemic signatures of the First world in terms of its democratic-capitalist-secularist model to be borne by the rest of the world. Speaking of authentic identity, R Radhakrishnan distinguishes between metropolitan hybridity and postcolonial hybridity and posits that metropolitan hybridity is 'underwritten by the stable regime of Western secular identity and the authenticity that goes with it'. He further posits that "Secularism is one of the chief obstacles on the postcolonial way to self-identification and self authentication. The question of authenticity has to do not just with identity but with certain attitude to identity [such as]... ruling out certain options as incorrect or inappropriate." [162]. Agha Shahid Ali's antipathy towards essentialism implied in secular vs sacred approaches to identity becomes clear from his intervention in the debates that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, debates that clearly polarized intellectuals the world over into identitarian politics of Western-secular-free speech advocates vs Islamic fundamentalists. Disinclined to identify with any of these camps, Ali in his essay titled "The Satanic Verses: A Secular Muslim's Response" claims to be offended by Rushdie's fiction as being "gratuitously insulting" it provokes a fundamentalist response rather than effectively exposing it. Ali thus refuses to succumb to the normative Western authentic identity or even western hybridity premised on its own ideals. Instead of turning to experiential reality to locate meaning as any rationalist would, the poet as a true Muslim, rather chooses to refer to his faith. The poetry of Agha Shahid Ali offers us a site where the personal faith [A Shia Muslim] of the poet is foregrounded, helping him to comprehend and come to terms with various layers of losses, personal (loss of mother and friends), political (the violence and destruction in Kashmir), and cultural (loss of homeland, composite culture). It is also construed a code through which Ali deconstructs the established congealed categories of hierarchies and binarisms such as East /West, national/ diaspora, life/death and Self and Other and positively constructs identity which is truly postcolonial hybrid.

Contrary to western canonization of individuality, "hybridity or heterogeneity is underwritten in the postcolonial experience" [159] posits R Radhakrishnan. Ali's poetry too in its search for authentic identity, engages in this 'excruciating act of self-production by and through multiple traces' [159]. The first two volumes of Agha Shahid Ali, *Bone Sculpture* [1972] and *The Half Inch Himalayas* [1987] are attempts to recover these traces, as the poet follows the genealogy of his ancestors and their lives. Islam is the religion that the poet has inherited and hence his identity as a Shia Muslim is foregrounded right from the very first collection of Ali's poetry *Bone Sculpture* where the poet goes back in time when he is "twenty, a mourner in the Mohurrum/ procession, mixing blood with/ mud, memory with memory". [*Bone Sculpture*]. The present therefore is in constant conflict with the inherited past, a past where "My grandfather's painted grandfather" has "the Koran lying open on a table beside him" [35] and the poet looks for "prayers / in his eyes, for inscriptions / in Arabic." [35]; it is a past where the grandmother went into the night "in one hand the Koran, in the other / a minaret." [39]; a past of "intervals / between the day's / five calls to prayer" when prayer rugs are folded "so the Devil's shadow / would not desecrate / Mecca scarlet-woven with minarets of gold" [40]; a past of grandmother's pilgrimage to Mecca with "the women's foreheads / touching Abraham's / silk stone of sacrifice" [41] But this past is not univocal. It also inhabits grandfather "reciting verses of Sufi mystics...mumbling "philosopher king," / Napoleon on his lips, / .../ in his cup/ Socrates swirled." [36], a past where "My father mouthed Freud and Marx" [BS] and mother who "played old records / of the Banaras thumri singers, / ... / hummed Heer's lament" [44-45] Having inherited these multiple traditions the poet became a skeptic even at a young age:

I asked Grandma: Is God a Muslim?

...

No one taught me the Koran.

Then our servant lost his shoes at the mosque.

I had nothing left to ask.

(From Note Autobiographical - 1)

The poet admits that, "Dreams of Islam crumbled for me" [BS] This interior conflict is dramatically exteriorized in the poem "In the Mountains" where even as the poet has forgotten "every Name of God" [79] his doppelganger/ his other, "counts on a cold rosary / God's ninety-nine Names in Arabic" and with "the Koran frozen on his fingertips", waits for the poet's death.

The many selves that constitute identity emanate from history which goes beyond the control of 'individual intentionality' [R Radhakrishnan 161]. Agha Shahid Ali acknowledges all these traces of memory and history sedimented in his present being without succumbing to their primordial pulls. Accordingly, even as the ubiquitous presence of Islam resurfaces in the fifth and sixth collections of Agha Shahid Ali titled, *The Country Without a Post office* [1997] and *Rooms Are Never Finished* [2001] with numerous allusion to Islam and repeated references to Muslim rituals, Ali, does not endorse the austere, authoritative juridical Islam. Ali draws from various registers of alterity within Islam such esoteric or Sufi traditions and

the Shia traditions of mourning and memorialising through memory to puncture the narrative of dogmatic Islam. Born of a mother with Sufi lineage, father a Shia Muslim, ancestors who themselves were diaspora from Samarkand, located in the land of Sufi rishis, all these stands of alterity intermingled in Ali's poetry in a manner that eminently represents South Asian sensibilities.

The Country Without a Post Office [1997] captures the moment of return of the diaspora citizen to his homeland Kashmir and its people, only to discover that this 'paradise on earth' is wrought by death and destruction, becoming a land where history and memory contaminate each other, where desolation is confused with peace, a land of curfewed nights, searchlights chasing shadows, entombed minarets, empty cities and farewells. In face of this threat of death and destruction, the desire for faith too becomes more desperate. Even as God is called upon frequently throughout the volume, it is only to delineate God's helplessness, as the poet says in the opening prose poem "The Blessed Word: A Prologue," "It was Id-uz-Zuha: a record of God's inability, for even He must melt sometimes, to let Ishmael be executed by the hand of his father" [172]. On such an occasion of God's inability "Kashmir was under curfew." Kashmir is a land where "muezzin is dead" but Call to prayer is still sent out by a secret keeper of the minaret. It is also a land where:

In the lake the arms of temples and mosques are locked
in each other's reflections.

Have you soaked saffron to pour on them when they are
found like this centuries later in this country
I have stitched to your shadow? [176]

Kashmir is land of Sufi saints like Shah Hamadan, Sheikhu'l Alam Nooruddin [Nund Rishi, Lal Ded, Habba Khatun] and Sufi shrines are revered in Kashmir by Hindus and Muslims alike. In this sense, the destruction of land is seen by Ali as a threat to the eclectic Kashmiri culture. The poet refers to tying "a knot with green thread at Shah Hamdan, to be / untied only when the atrocities / are stunned by your jeweled return." [180] In another poem, 'I Dream I am the Only Passenger' the poet imagines being in conversation with Sheikh Nooruddin, who prophesies further doom, by saying "All threads must be untied / before springtime, Ask all- Muslims ad Brahmin- /if their wish came true?"... Alas! .../ It is too late for thread at Charar-i-Sharif." [187]

Kashmir has a rich legacy of Rishi Sufic order which as Muzaffar Alam⁸ points out, "was a result of interaction between Islamic Sufism and Hindu mystic ideas and teachings as these were expressed in particular in Lalla-Vakyani (the wise sayings of Lalla Yogeshwari or Laleshwari, a fourteenth century Shaivite yogini and poet)" [156]. These Sufis, despite their endorsement of several indigenous Hindu practices, continued with their proselytizing task. Disciples of Sheikh Nooruddin [1378-1439] included many Hindu who had converted to Islam by reciting *Kalima*. Thus their eclectic approach did not diminish centrality of Islam in their world-view. Ali, who was naturally influenced by these traditions, was so different.

In the poem "Hans Christian Ostro" an elegy for a German tourist kidnapped and killed in Kashmir, the poet, a Muslim addressing other Muslims, returns to Islamic philosophy when he says, "Whoso gives life to a soul / shall be as if he had to all of mankind / given life" to decry Islamist politics [237]. In other words, as a true Muslim, Ali subjects dogmatic Islam to what Ziauddin Sardar terms as 'purely Islamic way of thinking' which rises above the dogma and advocates right over evil.

Ali also attempts to develop a pan Islamic perspective by invoking Palestine, Chechnya and Sarajevo alongside Kashmir to ask "what else besides God disappears an alter?" [238] Poems like "First Day of Spring," "The City of Daughters" and "A Villanelle," deal with the poet's vacillation between faith and non-faith. Even as he wonders, "On this perfect day, perfect for forgetting God, why are they – Hindu or Muslim, Gentile or Jew, shouting again some Godforsaken word of God?" [227], he himself cannot help calling out to God as he admits, "And God? Here/again, why I believe in Him" [230] or even tries to console himself, "In this dark rain, be faithful, Phantom heart". He yearns for the solace and security that comes with faith where "The Koran still protects the house, lying strangely wrapped in a jamawar shawl" [200]. But he debunks all overt signifiers of pan-Islamic world such as the high culture of Arabic, calling it "the only language of loss left in the world." Ali's ghazal "Tonight" captures Ali's critical attitude towards all institutionalized religions as well as his deep desire to cling to his faith. Like a true Kashmiri, Ali invokes the multiple faiths of his childhood in the poem by alluding to Christian [Elijah and Jezebel], Muslim [Ishmael and idol breaking Lord] and Hindu [priest in saffron] imagery. But instead of aspiring for freedom the poet says,

I beg for haven: Prison, let open your gates –
A refugee from Belief seeks a cell tonight. [193]

Thus even as a dogmatic religious practices are shunned, the desire for 'haven' of an organized faith continues to attract the poet. The poet carries a sustained attack on orthodoxies by choosing overtly blasphemous stances such as the decision 'bless Jezebel' or letting idols speak, and drawing from the antinomian spirit of Sufi Islam, ignores the antithetical polarities ["He's left open—for God—the doors of Hell tonight."]. But when it comes to choosing a persona for himself, he prefers to cast himself as Ishmael, the rejected son in Bible [Genesis 20:14], but the chosen son of Abraham in Koran, thereby once again decisively affiliating himself to Islamic traditions, and upholding the centrality of Islam in his life:

And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—
God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight. [193]

The vulnerability of God with reference to Ishmael invoked in the first poem of the volume is re-echoed here, with the poet choosing the persona of Ishmael, through whose sacrifice this vulnerability was exposed. Thus once again the poet reiterates the need for re-appraisal of Islam from within.

Ali's last collection *Rooms Are Never Finished*, foregrounds Ali's Shia lineage to provide the poet with yet another perspective from within Islam to undertake a critique of the dogmatic registers of Islam. The poet, a witness, an eternal sufferer, aligns himself now with the sufferers of Karbala, the martyred Imam Hussain and his exiled sister Zainab to come to terms with his worst personal loss, the death of his mother. In pan-Islamic sense, Hussain's martyrdom at Karbala and its memorializing through Majlis and Muharram rituals pave way for 'alternative Islamic history.' Hence, Zainab's wails as she bid farewell to her dead brother Hussain, expose the split within Islamic fold, the split between the political Islam and the spiritual one, as she laments,

Deaf Damascus, here in your caliph's dungeons
Where they mock the blood of your prophet, I'm an
orphan. Hussain's sister, a tyrant's prisoner. [264]

Concomitantly, in Indian culture the ritualistic Azadari practices observed alike by Sunnis, Shias and Hindus, have for centuries strengthened composite culture of India. And in the Urdu literary tradition, from which Ali heavily draws, Karbala is a metaphor, a call to all suppressed minorities to rise against the oppressor majority. 'Only Karbala could frame our grief' claims the poet and poem after poem, he reconstructs the grief of Hussain's exiled sister Zainab, her wails to frame his personal grief, the irredeemable loss of his mother, as well as the grief of his land where 'for two years Death had turned every day in Kashmir into some family's Karbala.' [263]

Here again the dogmatic register of Islam fails to offer succor to the poet and in the poem "I Dream I am at the Ghat of the Only World" the poet declares,

I see desecration. God's tapestry
Ripped, the faded chant of 'there is no god but God
And Mohammed...emptied of all its eternity. [319]

The absolutism and authoritarianism implied in *Kalima-i-Shahadat*, which vests authority in God's oneness and Muhammad's unique position as His first prophet runs counter to secularist stance of accommodating divergent ideals and views. Ali would rather affiliate with the Shia mourners on Ashura invoking Muhammad, "O Muhammad, the angles of Heaven send blessings upon you, but this is your Hussain, so humiliated and disgraced, covered with blood and cut into pieces, and your daughters are made captives, your butchered family is left for the East wind to cover with dust." Here too, as in the case of Ishmael parable, the injustice of God is difficult to comprehend. "How could God allow this to happen?", the mourners ask, going on to even declare, "God is the only, the only assassin." [269]

By both invoking it to articulate his losses and then truncating it to rip God's tapestry, Ali once again positions himself as a critic of Islam from within. At the same time, the desire to believe becomes more acute in face of a general drama of pain that life offers and the

constant threat of death that awaits this life. Through faith the poet hopes to overcome the self/other, life/death, Ashiq/Mashuq, divide. In his Ghazals, these desires are desperately articulated, the articulation itself ranging from sarcastic, to cynical and even despairing at times. Sample a few examples:

Are your streets, Abraham, washed of 'the Sons of Stones'?

Sand was all Ishmael once drew of water. [344]

For God's sake don't unveil the black stone of Kaaba
What if Faith too's let love bead a dew of water?" [344]

You play innocence so well, with such precision Shahid:
You could seduce God Himself and fuck the sexless angles. [342]

Of all things He's the King Allah King God.
Then why this fear of idolizing God? [368]

So what make you of cosmic background noise?
Well, there's the Yoni (*My!*) and the Ling (*God!*). [368]

I believe in prayer and the need to believe-
Even the Great Nothing signifying God. [368]

The answers, however, are not easily available for 'No mortal has or will ever lift my veil.' Despite repeated attempts, the poet fails to complete the *kalma-i-shahadat* and announces its desecration for Ali's personal faith is not constituted by dogmatic Islam but rather by the more tolerant and liberal strands of it such as Sufi traditions and Shia rituals [as also other religious traditions of the dark God Krishna, and the figure of Ishmael, shared by Islamic and Christian traditions]. Therefore, it is not surprising that for a poet hopelessly struggling to make sense of things, and asking "Is there some hope of making a world of sense" [24], the final answer should come from this very faith in Sufi traditions of Islam as the poet finally discovers, "I am still alive, alive to learn from your eyes / that I am become your veil and I am all you see" [25]. This assertion, almost an echo of Sufi '*man tu shudi /tu man shudam*' coming at the end of Ali's posthumously published poem 'The Veiled Suite', reads like the swan song of the poet.

R. Radhakrishnan argues, "It is important to the postcolonial hybrid to compile a laborious inventory of one's self" and on the basis of that complex genealogical process, to produce her own version of identity and find political legitimacy for that version." [159] Ali's delineation of his personal faith, in his poetry, in this sense can be seen as an attempt on part of the poet to produce his own version of identity and by articulation, find legitimacy for it.

Coming at a time when in the wake of Rushdie controversy, secular vs religious debates in the West morphed into Christianity vs Islam or Western Modernity vs Islamic fundamentalism paradigm, Ali's insistence on his Muslim identity accompanied by his daring

disavowal of its dogmatic orthodoxy, positions him alongside post-secularists, who do not shy away from critiquing secular and sacred alike.

References:

- Ali, Agha Shahid. "Introduction." *Ravishing DisUnities: Real Ghazals in English*. Middletown: Wesleyan, University Press, 2000. Print.
- Geoghegan, Vincent. "Religious Narrative and Postsecularism." 15 Sept. 2008. 8Feb. 2010.PDF File.
- Krishnan, R. Radha. *Between identity and Location: The Cultural Politics of Theory*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007. Print.
- Mishra, Vijay. *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Mufti, Aamir. "Critical Secularism: A Reintroduction for Perilous Times" *Boundary 2*. 31, 2, Summer 2004. Print.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Print.
- "The Satanic Verses: A Secular Muslim's Response," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 4.1 (1990/1991): 295-300. Print.

Professor Hameed Khan

Radical transformations have drastically changed the notions of life and art. Literature, therefore, is no more considered as an aesthetic object lodged in an ontological ambience as the modernists believed. Ideological/imperialistic intricacies ostensibly distance literature from the sacred which has invariably been an integral constituent of enduring literary discourses. A careful analysis of the recent creative and critical productions can convincingly bear it out. The sacred is noticeably relegated in the wake of the prioritisation of issues. Distortion and appropriation of history in the visual and print media, issues of market economy and political precedence provide ample evidence of the divide between the sacred and the creative intention. The sacred as the governing principle of the operations of literary imagination and aesthetics has not received the amount of attention and urgency it deserves. It has either been inseparably linked with faith or institutional religion, or, with something beyond. Philosophers and thinkers, right from Emile Durkheim, Heidegger and Bergson to Foucault, Baudrillard and Derrida have addressed themselves to the multiple directions of sacred in dialectical or oppositional terms.

The paper, therefore, modestly proposes that sacred needs to be redefined in the recent national and international context. Because the dynamics of sacred remains lost in the labyrinth of tradition directed detentions, or, dialectics, dichotomies or binaries. The world order, probably, needs a little more beyond. Borrowing a highly loaded word from Foucault, the paper, if it is not misconstrued, humbly proposes that archaeology of sacred needs to be theorised beyond its anthropological and religious originary, its linguistic connotations, and, also beyond its ontological referent that underscore culture-specific semantics. Sacred, as we all know, is essentially *characterised* a variety of semantic versions in different phases of human civilization.

A quick review and chronotopical perception, if it can be said so, of the trajectory of sacred can convincingly reveal the changing dimensions of sacred. Even during the overarching decades of postmodernism, which firmly stood against any sort of hegemony, canonization or authoritarianism, social scientist, critics and intellectuals explicated the resurgence of religion, ipso facto, or, its other constituents, as analogous to religion apropos of Nietzsche's "death of God" and proliferation of non-scientific ways of thinking as a cultural corollary.

There are, however, certain books, recently published, which, deal with as the titles suggest, with the basic premises of their concerns. Sacred in its broader sense, however, remains to be taken up elaborately. It is topography, arts, aesthetics or the essentials of religious dimensions occupy the kernel of the discourses in these texts. Santiago Zabala, in his "Introduction" to *The Future of Religion: Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo*, (edited) referring to them attempts seeking a dissolution of the tensions between religion and humanistic-scientific culture. It, nevertheless, remains a debatable issue as the divide still

persists. There are scholars and intellectuals who have insightfully discussed the return of religious and spirituality in the postmodern discourses buttressed by the examples and elucidation from the contemporary fictional corpus in America and European countries like France and Italy. Anthony Kubiak traces out resurgence of spirituality in theory which led to a number of doctoral researches in academia. Spirituality, it should be mentioned here, is not the entire religion per se, it is a constituent of it and exists even sans religion in different brands of literary and philosophical productions. Gianni Vattimo closely links spirituality to "...Social, to identity and to identity politics" (89). Impact of secular on sacred, or vice versa, is another important aspect of modern literary theory. Suzan Handelman, in *The Slayers of Moses*, closely follows the presence of the mysticism in the discourses of secular theory. She also discusses the blending of secular and sacred from hermeneutical point of view. The distinction between religion and spiritual continues to be in literary criticism, critical theory and also in cultural theory. Postmodern critical theology, in fact is tinged with 'the absence of god'. Spirituality, however, is not perceived here in terms of the conventional institutions and rituals. It is rather looked upon as a personal quest for the sacred beyond the precincts of institutional religion.

The Sacred has also been discussed in dialectical or oppositional terms, like, sacred and profane, orthodoxy and secularisation, faith and reason and also in terms of 'religion without religion', as Derrida calls it. The 19th century philosophers, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche had maintained a sharp division between the two world views—heaven and earth, 'the visible and invisible. Durkheim declared the "The division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane. (*Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (1912; English translation, 1915). Mercea Eliade in his *History of Religious Ideas*, looks upon the modern world as highly disruptive. 'the ultimate stage of desecralisation' and identifies it with the profane.

This dichotomy and entanglement between sacred and secular, sacred and profane was taken up further and explored by the modernists and postmodernist philosophers and social scientists in their intellectual discourses. Quite a few scholars** have pointed out that Durkheim's idea of "society is God", sacred and profane, reason and faith, and, Bergson's conceptualisation of 'static' and 'dynamic' religion had a noticeable impact on the perceptions and productions of the postmodern thinkers like, Baudrillard, Derrida and even Foucault with a little less variation. Durkheim identifies society with god on the basis of his deep studies and microscopic analysis of Australian tribes. He considers totem, both as the symbol of god and of society. Riley points out that it because of his exclusion of deity from religion Durkheim was identified as a rational secularist. (Riley, Durkheim).

"Sacred impure" is yet another dimension of Durkheim's theory. He argues that religious forces "are benevolent guardians of the physical and moral order, life and death, all the qualities that men value" and "there are negative and impure powers that produce disorder, sacrilege, disease, and death" and therefore "all religious life gravitates around two opposite poles which share the supposition between pure and impure holy and

sacrilegious...." He finds these two opposing aspects closely related and asserts that in religious and profane cannot coexist. The existence of sacred demands exclusion of the profane. Baudrillard clearly shows a great influence of Durkheim's theory in his treatment of the sacred. The sacred in Baudrillard's work, however, refers to profane against Durkheimian alliance of the impure sacred with the evil as opposed to good. Baudrillard approximates the idea of the sacred through the contrasting relationship between the semiotic and symbolic, a relationship which permeates much of Baudrillard's analysis of Postmodern culture. His views on masses, their revelry, denial of meaning, spectacle, sign and semiotics attribute his critique of political economy of capitalism and postmodern culture at large, noticeably sharp and distinctive focus.

Michal Foucault is another prophetic postmodern voice addressing itself to the issues of sacred in the prevailing context. It is resistance that characterise the archaeology of Foucault's thought. For him revival of the sacred is possible through transgression, through continual interrogation of the limits. In his "A Preface to Transgression", Foucault links transgression with the sacred. Borrowing *insights* from George Bataille and Maurice Blanchot, Foucault asserts that transgression 'crystallises the sacred'. Sex, death, God/religion have always been interlinked in Foucault's versions and vision. For Foucault the sacred can be achieved through sexuality, language and art, because, it is language that takes into account sexuality and not eroticism per se. He, therefore associates transgression with the sacred because there is nothing to be desecrated in the absence of God in a world "emptied of objects, beings and spaces to desecrate" (30). Huge corpus of fiction can be quoted here as an illustration of Foucault's statements. John Updike is an excellent example to be mentioned here. In his novels, especially the first one of the *Rabbit* tetralogy, *Rabbit, Run* and *Couples*, Updike exemplifies Foucault's assertion. In *Couples*, it is categorically stated, 'People are the only thing people are left with after God packed up. By people I mean sex', where people have made 'churches of each other', and sanctity is ostensibly attributed to adultery and sexual aberrations. Foucault's transgression, despite his warnings, has been extensively appropriated to authenticate the voices from the marginality.

Jaques Derrida's creative attempts, on the contrary, are directed toward liberating the sacred from the religious dogmatism and authority through reason, he believes justice to be as the new avenue for the sacred. In his lecture on "Faith and Knowledge," he delivered at conference on religion in Italy; he stresses the urgency of 'here and now'. He proposes to rethink religion within the limits of reason and affiliate rationality to the sacred which he hopes to find in a universal religion, 'a religion without religion.'

The above discussions on the trajectory of the sacred clearly reveals that the sacred has, both, as an integral constituent of religion, as an episteme and also a behavioural code has lost its grandeur, its immediacy and urgency. It has lost its elemental purity and intensity during the torrential overflow of social movements, economic designs and imperialistic cultural conspiracies.

In such an era of moral disruptions and desacralisation of sacred institutions, the sacred and its actualization can offer redemptive possibilities. The paper, therefore, as has already been pointed out humbly stresses the need for redefining the sacred, and a step further, theorize it beyond the precincts of traditions and/or exclusive intellectualization and attribute a space to the sacred:

The sacred as a mode of perception of the external phenomenon, of the reality and the reality of the inter-personal and social relationships.

The sacred as a taxonomic indicator which, not only in the individual but in the collective sense too, consciously (and unconsciously in its most refined sense) sorts out the categories of the pure sacred, impure, secular and even profane, and discards whatever goes against the order of the sacred.

This attitudinal transformation, in an absolutely natural way, value and opt for the issues of eternal verity, like, the issues of selfless love, human rights and unmediated sense of truth and justice. And would lead to what Derrida stresses as a model of republican democracy. This will also lead to an emancipation from what the theories have been bemoaning as, power politics, economic and cultural imperialism and even from religious dogmatism or fundamentalism in a larger sense.

The problem of spirituality and mysticism can also be authentically substantiated in the light of the discussions from Durkheim, Foucault, Derrida, William James and Existential theologians like Kierkegaard, John Barth and many others. Derrida has also quoted Montaigne and Pascal in his "Faith and Knowledge" in this regard. Foucauldian concept of transgression, discussed earlier, and the space it associates with the sacred, Salah suggests, provides opportunity for transformation.

However, the best model of the sacred, the paper believes, can be provided by our indigenous Sufi/ Sant literature and the literature of this sort produced all over the world.

Because the sacred basically aims at dissolving the distances between the self and the other, the self and the society and also destabilize the dichotomy between the body and mind. A problem that seems to overshadowing literary discourses. Sufism offers additional vintage position in its attribution of sacred rational of human perception and behavior besides faith beyond; at times what is traditionally defined by religions. The self and the society operate on the levels of equality here.

The social matrix and complexities of the inner self, for the sacred, in fact, is a site for transcendence and transformation. The sacred strengthens and authenticates the relationships between the self and the entire social cosmos, not in I-It or objective oriented sort of relationship but I-Thou relationship as Martin Buber calls it. Eastern philosophy, especially,

Sufi philosophy addresses the issue more effectively. Persian poetic expression emblemizes the point:

Creative and critical language and linguistic tropes, their deployment from this point of view accentuates the movement of the text toward or away from it. Linguistic dimensions of literary texts embodying ideologies or ideological debates can proffer models to establish the point.

The sacred, therefore, needs to be perceived as a system of thought, inadvertently operating in the domain of the quotidian, daily human transaction, in 'the sanity of every day life, here now', that we can find blissfulness. In this world of capitalistic desacralisation, it is only the sacred that can be believed to promote justice, human dignity and social order. Approximation of intellectual and literary productions from this view point can facilitate perception and actualisation of the sacred in literature. After all, restoration of social order and authenticity of human relationship is the prime intent of literature.

Too munshudi, mun Too shudam — You have become me, and me you,
Too jaanshudimun tan shudam — You are the soul and me the body
Ta kasnagoyadbaadazein — Nobody can now say that
Too deegreemundeegram — that you and I are different.

On the Wings of Fire: The Ethnoreligious Strand in Contemporary Parsi Literature

Nilufer E. Bharucha

Small bands of Iranians first landed on Indian soil in 785 AD or 936 AD, depending on which particular historical version you wish to privilege. They were a motley bunch of men, women and children in small *dhow*s who were fleeing the conquest of Iran by Arabs. They were followers of the ancient monotheistic religion, Zoroastrianism, and brought with them to India their sacred fires, the symbol of *Ahura Mazda*, the Lord of Light. Borne on the wings of their sacred fire, they made landfall at Diu in Gujarat. Here they came to be called Parsis, probably after the language they spoke, *Farsi*. The name could also have come from the Southern Iranian province of *Pars/Fars*.

The earliest documented literature written by the Parsis is the foundational text *Kissah-e-Sanjan*, written by Bahman Kaikobad Sanjanain 1599 C.E., which praises Parsi courage and bears witness to their arrival in India. In the oral tradition, there is the Parsi *Garbo*, based on the Gujarati folk song and dance tradition, which also records the arrival of the Parsis on Indian soil and their conditional acceptance in Sanjan. At this time were also compiled the *Rivajats*, which sought, through visits to Iran, to supplement the Zoroastrian prayers and tracts lost to the Parsis in India. So the extant literature, oral and written, of the pre-colonial period consisted of religious tracts and remembrance esteem boosting narratives of valour.

It is only with the advent of British colonialism that we find the Parsi voice raised for the first time in documented creative expression. Why did this happen? Was it because, in the colonial space - neither Hindu nor Muslim - the Parsis now felt confident enough to write in a creative mode? This colonial Parsi writing was not overtly ethnoreligious in tone though. In fact it was not even always written in English or solely in English. Behramji Malabari (1853-1912) for instance, was a bi-lingual, Gujarati and English, writer, poet and journalist who was also a social reformer.

In decolonized India, the exalted position enjoyed by the Parsis during the Raj has been eroded, and increasing dominance by the majority Hindu community has marginalized them. Parsis today are trying to reorient themselves to this new, much reduced role. Some seek to assimilate into the Indian mainstream, while others move to the West. In both cases, the Parsi identity is a casualty. This identity is an ethnoreligious one in which the racial Parsi/Persian is yoked to the religious Zoroastrian. Retention of this identity is crucial if Parsis are to survive the twenty first century. This scenario has resulted in a resurgence of ethnoreligious writing among the Parsis especially in the post-1980s period. The demographic time bomb - there are fewer than 1,25,000 Parsis all around the globe - which has been ticking away towards the imminent annihilation of the community, has lent a piquant last-witness tone to much of Parsi literature in the last 30 odd years.

Thus one finds in the writings of contemporary postcolonial Parsis like Boman Desai, Bapsi Sidhwa, Dina Mehta, Rohinton Mistry, Keki Daruwala and Gieve Patel ethnoreligious details like the arrival from Iran, Parsi customs, Zoroastrian prayers and rituals, etc. This inclusion of the ethnoreligious in literature is a reaction to the perception of not just a marginalization in contemporary India but also in the face of an almost inevitable extinction, a desire to record for posterity the very existence of Parsi Zoroastrians.

This paper thus deals with how contemporary Parsi writers have combined story-telling with telling the story of the Parsi Zoroastrians in India and focused on their ethnic and religious affiliations.

Literature by Parsis in Postcolonial India began slowly. In the early decades after independence and the partitioning of India that attended upon this event, there were very few Parsi writers. Even in the 1960s and 70s, there were only some Parsi writers of consequence - the most notable being Keki Daruwala and Adil Juasawalla, the poets; B.K. Karanjia, the short story writer and Gieve Patel - poet & dramatist, who is also a painter of considerable merit and a practising medical doctor. They were, however, overtaken by the novelists in the 1980s. This decade began on a high note with Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters*. The Lahore based Sidhwa's novel created a flutter for the right and wrong reasons among Indian Parsis, but the literary world gave a warm welcome to this writer who since then has achieved much fame and whose book *The Ice-Candy Man*, on the partitioning of India, as seen through the eyes of a little Parsi girl, has been turned into an international film - *Earth*. Bapsi Sidhwa, though a Pakistani, is usually included in the canon of Parsi writers as the partitioning of India saw divided bloodlines among the Parsis, with those who found themselves in the new state of Pakistan, choosing to stay on there. Even today there are around 4,000-6000 Parsi Zoroastrians in Pakistan, mainly in Karachi and Lahore.

The 1980s and 1990s also saw the rise of Rohinton Mistry, Boman Desai, Dina Mehta, Firdaus Kanga and Ardeshir Vakil. Among these writers it is Mistry who has attained high global visibility with his collection of short stories, *Tales from Ferozsha Baag*, followed by the novels *Such a Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters*. One can also mention the texts of two other Parsi writers whose fiction was published in the dying years of the Twentieth Century - Armin Wandrewala and Mehr Pestonji. Wandrewala's *The Turning* is a text that fits into the genre of detective fiction and Pestonji's collection of short stories, *Mixed Marriage and other Parsi Stories* and her novel *Pervez* are more socio-political in their orientation, but both these writers have focussed on the question of Parsi women who have married outside the community and whose children are denied entry into the communal fold. Very often these women themselves, although they might continue practising the Zoroastrian religion, are ostracised and not allowed entry into Zoroastrian places of worship and after death denied the Zoroastrian funeral rites and their bodies turned away from the

Towers of Silence. This is a crucial issue before Parsi Zoroastrians today and these texts therefore perform a very important function in focussing the community's attention on it. In addition, Pestonji's *Pervez* has a socio-political, almost activist focus on gender, race and religious issues. *Pervez* is also very critical of fence-sitting Parsis, who mouthed platitudes during the post-Ayodhya riots in Bombay in 1992-93, but did little to help the riot victims.

What also marks this literature of Parsis from the midnight hour when India achieved her independence from her colonial masters, to the beginning of the second Christian millennium, is the increasing focus on race and religion. Faced with the brutal reality of the imminent death of their race, the Parsis have retaliated with an ethnocentric discourse that would bear witness to their existence on this planet, long after they have become extinct. The literature of Parsis today therefore has the clear stamp of the last witness texts as well as that of minority discourse. This provides this literature with a special identity.

The Euro-American academia and publishing houses tend to lump together all writers from former colonies in the category of Postcolonial and consider their discourse in the light of current postcolonial theories. While the writing of the postcolonials does foreground fractures and subversions, such hegemonising is ultimately reductive. For instance, the all-encompassing label of Postcolonial elides the fact that texts by the Parsi writers might display many features of postcolonialist writing, but they are also engaged in creating their own spaces within the dominant Indian cultural space. As Arun Prabha Mukherjee (1990) puts it, postcolonial theories focus only on those texts that subvert or resist the coloniser and overlook the fact that a many postcolonial texts also focus on other issues such as ethnicity, gender and religious differences which are not sub-textual in the Parsi texts, or for that matter in the texts of the other Indian English writers of the 1980s. Postcolonial theories tend to suppress these differences. Ethnicity especially is an almost pejorative term for those who think in terms of post-nationalism and the global order. Yet it is as central to the discourse of many Postcolonial writers as are subversion and resistance.

In order to preserve their ethnic identity in India the Parsis practised strict rules of endogamy and a ban on conversion to Zoroastrianism. You cannot become a Parsi, you can only be born one. The ban on conversion to Zoroastrianism, does not apply in modern day Iran which still has a small number of Zoroastrians - approximately 25,000. However, converts to Zoroastrianism in Iran or any other part of the world, cannot legally be defined as Parsis in India. The promises made at the time of refuge in India, are today observed more for economic reasons than theological. Historically these promises and self-imposed conditions against conversion to Zoroastrianism were a means of self-protection and self-definition.

In Postcolonial India even though the Parsis do not enjoy the status they did as Colonial elite, they are not exactly a subaltern group. The fabled status of Parsis as one of the wealthiest Indian communities has declined and there is some very real poverty among them today, but there is still the cushion of substantial Trust Funds administered by the Parsis

Panchayats in the form of welfare schemes, grants to widows, scholarships for students and subsidised housing estates - like the eponymous Firozshah Baag of Mistry's collection of short-stories.

The notions of ethnicity, marginality and the subaltern can be seen foregrounded in the works of most postcolonial Parsi writers today. One sees this happen in the texts of Bapsi Sidhwa - *The Crow Eaters* and then *The Ice Candy Man*. Both these novels were set in pre-partition India and focus on the ethnic details, racial identity and self-esteem of the Parsis. These were also the first postcolonial Parsi novels that became highly visible and presented the Parsis not in glorified terms but with their whims and foibles all on show. *The Crow Eaters* especially created a furor among the Parsis who saw this as being insulting to the community. Sidhwa's *The Ice Candy Man* operates very often at the level of allegory. It details the political betrayal and symbolic rape of a hapless colony by a departing colonial power. The narrator of this dark and sordid tale is the maimed girl-child Lenny who is also symbolic of the dying Parsi community. Sidhwa's subsequent novels especially *An American Brat* continue the focus on the Parsi community, but more in the context of postcolonial Pakistan and then the western diasporic situation in the USA. Boman Desai's *Memory of Elephants* addresses itself to the question of identity both in colonial and postcolonial India. This is also a text that revels in postmodern experimentation but its importance to the Parsi literary canon is more on account of it taking note of how a marginal community can impact upon the dominant group. This is most evident in the character of Bapaiji, the protagonist's feisty grandmother who in her persona of a Parsi, and hence neither Hindu nor Muslim, acts as a peace-maker in her town, when there are communal tensions. This is the authority of the marginal man/woman. Dina Mehta in *And Some Take a Lover* has gone back to the time when India was fighting for freedom from the British. Here the Parsi community, which was then colonial elite, is represented by Roshni, who tries to overcome this perception of her people and attempts to integrate with the Gandhian freedom fighters. Roshni is not accepted by her Gandhian boyfriend and this breaks her heart. She on the rebound takes a lover but he too betrays her and finally Roshni tries to strike out on her own and attempts to live a life faithful to her past, present and the future independent India.

Rohinton Mistry as noted earlier is the most visible of Parsi writers today, having won many international awards, such as the Governor General of Canada's Prize for Literature and the Commonwealth Prize for Literature. He has also been short-listed for the Booker Prize more than once. Mistry was born and educated in Bombay but since 1975 has lived in Canada. His first book, the collection of short stories - *Tales from Firozsha Baag* published in 1987, marks a journey back to the beginning. The locale of these short stories is a Parsi housing complex in Bombay/Mumbai. Even though these stories might not be a nostalgic discourse, they are definitely stories that use memory and remembering as a narrative technique. Craig Tapping (1992) has said that in *Tales from Ferozsha Baag*, Mistry is engaged in identity construction through the location of the present in the past. Having said this, it must be admitted that the buildings in Firozsha Baag have very little of the airy-fairy imaginary about them. There is also little sentimentalising of the locale or its inhabitants.

They are presented to us peeling paint, peculiarities and all, what could be termed as nostalgia conjured as re-memory. In an interview Edward Said (1998) had once said that "exile is punishing but also rewarding. Once you have lost your homeland, it cannot be recovered as paradise". The first story in this collection, 'Auspicious Occasion', is replete with ethno-religious details of the Parsi-Zoroastrian calendar adopted by the Parsis in their Indian diaspora. Here each day of the month has a special name and some of these days are of particular religious importance. The female protagonist of this story decorates the threshold of her flat with auspicious designs drawn with white chalk powder, lights oil lamps and cooks special food on this day. She then dons the traditional white sari, white being the colour of purity and innocence in Zoroastrianism, and goes to the fire temple.

With *Such a Long Journey*, his first novel, Mistry moved into wider sociopolitical spaces within India. In this book the Parsi world comes out of its self-imposed isolation and interacts at the highest levels of finance and politics with the postcolonial Indian world. Mistry's *A Fine Balance* records the Internal Emergency- imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1975 - with unrelenting honesty. *A Fine Balance* is also a text in which Mistry has widened his canvas to include more than just the Parsi community. So although the novel opens with a Parsi woman Dina Dalal's story in Bombay, it soon enlarges its scope to include her lodger Maneck Kholah from a hill station in North India and her tailors, Ishvar and Omprakash, who come to her from a village. The narrative also encompasses what Walter Benjamin (1906) has termed the quintessential city characters - ragpickers, beggars and suicide victims/heroes. As their tragic tales unfold, one gets the impression that Mistry's text is attempting to articulate the silences of centuries of exploitation, domination and oppression of the poorest of the poor of India. However, this is not to imply that Mistry's characters are in any way able to change the power balance which in the first place made their marginalisation and silencing possible. In fact they appear to maintain the titular 'fine balance' between the exploiter and the exploited. According to Gayatri Spivak (1988) this is "An unrecognised contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual, is maintained by a verbal slippage". So Mistry's subalterns do not really speak but their silences are represented through the mediation of Mistry's narrative.

In *Family Matters* published in 2002, Mistry returns to Bombay and the Parsi world with a vengeance. Left behind are the villages by the river, the mountains and the absolute dregs of society. The focus once again is absolutely on the Parsi community and the canvas has thus shrunk considerably but this is not a reductive book. It is a book which is very 'big' in compassion - it is indeed Mistry's most compassionate book to date. At the age of 50, from his Canadian point of vantage, Mistry has viewed the life of a middle-class Parsi family in Bombay in the mid-1990s. Hence the diasporic time-warp has been minimized here to a considerable extent. Notwithstanding this political backdrop, *Family Matters* is above all else a rites of passage book in which the child is the witness - a kind of the child is the father of man text. The child in question is the nine year old Jehangir Chinoy, the younger son of

Roxana and Yezad. The father/patriarch figure is that of the seventy-nine year old Nariman Vakeel, his paternal grandfather. It is through Jehangir/Jhangla's eyes that the reader is made privy to much of the family politics that pervades the book. The central motif of *Family Matters* is the jigsaw puzzle that the boy tries to fit together, much like he tries to puzzle out the quarrels and power politics that rock his family and which he wishes hard would cohere together in happiness and harmony, like the pieces in his jigsaw puzzles. This however is a vain hope as his elders keep falling apart and happiness eludes the family. *Family Matters* is also a text in which the Parsi characters for the first time in Mistry's oeuvre display religious fundamentalism and the sacred becomes imprisoned in the dogmatic and narrow enclosures of bigotry. Here Yezad Chinoy the son-in-law of Nariman Vakeel and the father of Jehangir Chinoy beset by economic and social pressures retreats into hegemonic positions like many others in the Parsi community in India today and opposes his elder son Murad's marriage with a non-Parsi girl.

Rohinton Mistry's brother Cyrus Mistry who started out his literary career as a dramatist has in recent years begun writing novels too. His first novel *The Radiance of Ashes* (2005) was followed by *Chronicles of a Corpse Bearer* (2013). The second novel focuses on the community of Parsi corpse bearers who live in the premises of the towers of silence, the place where the Parsi dead are offered an eco-friendly disposal mode but are shunned by the Parsi community, some of whom even consider their touch inauspicious. This novel is based on a true story of the son of a Parsi high priest who falls in love with the daughter of a corpse bearer. He is then shunned by the community. This novel reveals details of the lives and rituals of the corpse bearers, unknown even to most Parsis themselves. This ethno-religious institution of the disposal of the dead is as much endangered as are the Parsi Zoroastrians themselves as the Indian vultures who do most of the disposal of the corpses at the towers of silence are an endangered species themselves and the Parsi Panchayats in big Indian cities and towns, which still have functioning towers of silence are trying all sorts of things to make up for the missing vultures, from installing vulture hatcheries, to the installation of solar panels inside the towers where the dead are consigned.

Eclipsed though they are by the novelists, there are Parsis who still practise other literary genres such as poetry and drama – especially the old guard like Keki Daruwala and Gieve Patel, who along with Adiljussawalla are still writing poetry. Like Nissim Ezekiel, the majority of Indian poets who write in English are enclosed within their limited urban spaces, especially the island of Mumbai. This however, is not true of Gieve Patel and even more so of Keki Daruwala. Daruwala's space is more expansive and the influences on him more Indian than Western. He is rooted in the North Indian landscape. "The Partition Ghazal" – from Daruwala's collection *Night River Poems* (2000), is illustrative of the wider space that he inhabits. In this poem the immediate history of India – its pastness and presentness – melt and meld together into an indivisible whole and it becomes a textual and emotional testimony to the continuing wholeness of a tragically divided India. The bloody images of the partitioning of India are woven into the destruction of the Babri Masjid almost half a

century later. Thus the poet exhorts himself in the ghazal-like closing lines: "Kaikhushroo - The past you talk of may not have been the past". Kaikhushroo being the full form of the Daruwala's first name Keki, has been used here in the manner of Urdu and Persian writers who usually end their work by bringing in a mention of their own names or pen-names. The strain of North Indian literary influences continues to be felt in the alternative translations of 'A Faiz Quatrain'.

Although Daruwala has rarely foregrounded his Parsi Zoroastrian origins in his poetry, he does have some fine poems that obliquely bring in his Parsiness. "On a Dying Millennium" is one of them and "Going Down the Night River" is the other. The former brings in the grand sweep of history and is about a poet who look back to the past and then forward to the future. In this poem Hitler the "five foot six inch anachronism/with the toothbrush moustache" is first compared to Ahriman, the Zoroastrian name for the representative of all that is evil and then the reader learns that this wasn't so and that "the ranks of Ahura Mazda are confused", for Gandhi thought that he was on God's side but then so did Godse. The tone of this poem is almost apocalyptic as the century and the millennium draw to their simultaneous close "For the last days of the millennium will cry out/like the last bird of a species/moving into extinction". "Going Down the River" is quieter in its tone. Here reference to the Zoroastrian faith is woven into the flow of the river and is extremely subtle. "A belfry tolls somewhere /somewhere the *geh* changes and a new prayer disappears/ through the fire-temple's exhaust". This image strikes an immediate chord in the heart of any Parsi reader who can almost visualize the prayer said at the changing of the 'geh', by the priest in a Parsi fire-temple, winging its way out into the cosmos through the interstices of the exhaust fan.

Records of Parsi Drama are available from the period of British colonial India - C.S. Nazir, *The First Parsi Baronet*, 1866, D.M. Wadia, *The Indian Heroine*, 1877, P.P. Meherji, *Dolly Parsen*, 1918. These Parsi playwrights founded the Parsi Theatre movement that had a major impact on Indian theatre and even early Indian cinema. The Parsi Theatre in the late nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries operated mainly in Gujarati and Hindustani. None of these texts displayed overt ethno-religious tones. The Parsi muse in drama, as in other literary genres in the colonial period, was happy with the newly emergent nationalist label of Indian.

In postcolonial India the novel form, as already noted has many high-profile Parsi practitioners, but the field of drama has fewer Parsis. Among the contemporary Indian playwrights, Gieve Patel and Cyrus Mistry are the only Parsis of note. All the three plays that Patel has written - *Princes*, *Savaksa*, and *Mister Behram* are focussed on the Parsi world. Mistry's first play, the Sultan Padamsee award-winning *Doongaji House*, was written in 1978, but was performed for the first time and also published only in 1991. Neither Patel nor Mistry writes in the tradition of the old Parsi Theatre which tackled large, epic subjects from

Indian history which were very clearly nationalistic in tone. Both these dramatists in fact actively resist the overblown style and melodrama of the old Parsi Theatre. They react even more strongly to any attempt to link their plays to those of another Parsi playwright, Adi Marzban, who wrote in Gujarati in the immediate postcolonial period. Marzban was a force to reckon with on the Gujarati stage in Bombay in the 1950s and 60s. His plays were the first ethnocentric dramatic texts written by a Parsi. They detailed Parsi society, customs, cuisine and above all humour. However, this humour often bordered on the farcical and his characters were caricatures and stereotypes rather than real people. He specialised in clownish old Parsi men and women - the *Bawajis* and *Maijis*. Like most Parsis today, Mistry and Patel disassociate themselves from these caricatures, but these clownish characters could have been clever ploys on the part of Marzban. They drew attention away from the Parsis' elite status in the colonial period. By portraying Parsis as a rather comic, harmless minority he made them objects of love and affection among the majority of the Gujarati Hindu community. In fact till date Gujarati Hindus are die-hard fans of Marzban's theatre and after his death have taken to reviving his plays, with a Parsi cast but with Gujarati Hindu directors.

Patel and Mistry's inspirations have been European and American dramatists. Patel's acknowledged influences are Ibsen and Racine, while Mistry has been inspired by Chekov, Ibsen and Eugene O'Neill. Neither acknowledges the Indian dramatic traditions, classical or folk. Both of them prefer the Western nineteenth century realistic mode and do not, unlike the other Indian dramatists, Karnad or Dattani go in for Indian folk or Brechtian experimentation. Mistry has said that for him content is more important than form and that there should be very good textual reasons for experimentation. If there is to be a break from reality it has to come naturally (Bharucha, 1998). In Patel's opinion taking on the folk tradition in contemporary metropolitan drama is like carrying artificial baggage. In his own words: "For me modern theatre is a metropolitan construct. You could call me a purist if you like but I stick to this view" (Bharucha, 1998). Patel is equally clear about the focus on Parsi race and Zoroastrian religion in his plays. He says that he has done this deliberately as he is most comfortable with that ethos and knows it most closely. However, he is quick to add that his plays are not just documents of the Parsi race and religion. In fact, Patel is not an orthodox Zoroastrian and nor is Cyrus Mistry. Patel says that he identifies with the Parsi ethos at the level of the social and cultural rather than the theological. For him this ethos has been the filter through which he has explored the dramatic possibilities of life. He very strongly refutes the idea that writing about Parsis reduces his plays to the level of ghetto discourse. For him the ethno-religious nature of his drama is a means of reasserting the Parsi space within the wider Indian context. Patel also offers the interesting contention that all communities in India are ghettoised and not just the Parsis.

Princes written in 1970, was Patel's first performed play. It is set in a small village in Gujarat, with a large Parsi population. The play centers around the confrontation between two families over a male child. The boy dies at the end of the play so that neither family gets him. The play is not overtly biographical but Patel has drawn upon his family background. It

is located in the village where his parents lived and the contested boy was his own elder cousin who died tragically young of rheumatic heart disease while the family squabbled across his deathbed.

In *Princes* as in *Savaksa* and *Mister Behram*, Patel has juxtaposed the Parsi race with the indigenous Warli race in Coastal Gujarat. The Warlis are tribals who are outside the pale of the Hindu caste system and live on subsistence farming and hunting. They were displaced from the margins of the Hindu villages, where they used to live, by the newly arrived Parsis. The Parsis cleared the land, planted guava and chikoo orchards and became big landlords for whom the Warlis worked as servants. So in Patel's plays one has him trying to work out the ambivalence of being at one and the same time the dominating, even oppressing class, and the ethno-religious minority that is anxious about the dominant Hindu community. Thus while on the one hand Patel's discourse is resistant to political and ideological domination, on the other it emerges from a socially and economically successful group.

Cyrus Mistry's *Doongaji House* (1991) could be seen as a metaphor for the Parsi community. Doongaji House is a dilapidated building full of old people and ageing single women. All the young people and families have left. The feeling of disintegration is further intensified when Hormusji, the main protagonist, once again sees the ghost of his old neighbour Dhanjisha Bapasola, who had died when Hormusji was still a boy. The ghost is in a sense the moral conscience of the Parsi community which has fallen upon bad times and forgotten its old Zoroastrian ethics. In addition to this focus on the disintegration of the Parsi community, the play is also full of ethno-religious details. The characters speak of the Parsi *Roj*, i.e. the day of the week according to the Parsi calendar. There is also a constant reference to Parsi food. Mistry's language too is in the tradition of the colourful Parsi Gujarati dialect. The increasing socio-political tensions between the Indian minorities and the Hindu majority is also focused upon in this play. Hormusji's son Fali brings the old people the news of a Hindu-Muslim riot but assures them they would be safe but Hormusji is not convinced. He feels he is under a siege and this feeling is intensified when his daughter Avan turns against her father and aligns herself with her cousin Cavas, the son of Hormusji's estranged brother. Even as Hormusji feels that his life is falling apart and his building becoming more and more dilapidated by the day, riots break out in the city and Hormusji is caught up in the violence. The last act opens with the chanting of the ancient Zoroastrian prayers said for the soul of one of the residents of Doongaji House, who was killed when his ceiling collapsed on him. The building is now sought to be evacuated but Hormusji refuses to leave and has to be persuaded by his wife Piroja.

Writing from the margins although an empowering position as it enables the writer spaces outside the constraints of the mainstream, need not be seen as a niche activity that is solely focused on ethnocentricity. Identities should ideally operate in ever-widening circles of belonging. Assertion of ethnicity come within the ambit of the first/primary circle, and is only one of the parameters of identitarian consciousness. For Parsis, the fact of being a Parsi Zoroastrian is a racial and religious identity, then comes the Nationalist identity, followed by

the wider transnational identity. None of these identities need cancel out the other. Since we do not live in a perfect world, however, they could come in conflict with one another, but they could equally well complement one another. Also, these identities could be differentially placed within private and public spaces. Having said that there could be overlaps within these spaces and private and public histories could clash. But it is precisely the sites of such clashes that result in what Bhabha (1994) has called 'the literature of recognition'. It is these liminal moments which throw up challenges and resistances to the hegemony of ethnicities/nations/civilisations. It is at such moments of what the Greeks called 'kairos' - when the eternal meets the temporal - that ethnocentric discourse moves into the realms of transnational textuality. It is when the particular becomes the general that we traverse from labelling a text ethnocentric to calling it an example of world literature.

References:

- Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Paris, 1906, Translated from the German by Harry Zohn, New Edition. New York and London: Verso, 1997. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994:9. Print.
- Bharucha, Nilufer E. "Personal Interview with Gieve Patel", 3 March 1998, quoted in Bharucha Nilufer E., "Retreating into Tribal Mansions: Race and Religion Written by Parsi Zoroastrians in India", 200-218, in *Modern Indian Theatre: A Reader*, Ed. Nandi Bhatia, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.
- Daruswala, Keki. *Night River: Poems*. Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2000. Print.
- Desai, Boman. *The Memory of Elephants*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1988.
- . *Asylum, USA*, London: Andre Deutsch, 2000. Print.
- Earth*, Dir. Deepa Mehta, Prod. Deepa Mehta and Anne Masson, 1998. Movie.
- Mehta, Dina. *And Some Take a Lover*. New Delhi: Rupa and Company, 1992. Print.
- Mistry Cyrus, *Doongaji House*. Bombay: Praxis, 1991. Print.
- . *The Radiance of Ashes*. Delhi: Picador, 2005. Print.
- . *Chronicles of a Corpse Bearer*. Delhi: Aleph Publishers, 2013. Print.
- Mistry, Rohinton. *Tales from Firazsha Baag*. London: Faber and Faber, 1987. Print.
- . *Such a Long Journey*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.
- . *A Fine Balance*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1995.
- . *Family Matters*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. Print.

Mukherjee, Arun Prabha. 'Whose Postcolonialism and Whose Postmodernism?', *World Literature Written in English*, 30.2, 1990, 1-9. Print.

Patel, Gieve. *Princes*, unpublished script, 1970.

---. *Savaksa*, *The Bombay Literary Review* 2, 1989:68-146. Print.

---. *Mister Behra*. Bombay: Praxis, 1988. Print.

Pestonji, Meher. *Mixed Marriage and Other Parsi Stories*. New Delhi: Harper Collins India, 1999. Print.

---. *Pervez*. New Delhi: Harper Collins India, 2003. Print.

Sanjana, Bahman Kaikobad. *Kissah-e-Sanjan*. 1599, Manuscript. Translations by E.B. Eastwick, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Bombay, 1842; Shapurshah Hormusji Hodivala, *Studies in Parsi History*. Bombay, 1920; M.S. Irani, *The Story of Sanjan*. Poona, 1943. Print.

Said, Edward. Interview with Nikhil Padgaonkar. *DD Metro*, December 6, 1998. TV.

Sidhwa, Bapsi. *Crow Eaters*. Bombay: Sangam Books, 1980. Print.

---. *Ice Candy Man*. India: Penguin Books, 1988. Print.

---. *An American Brat*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 1994. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988: 272. Print.

Tapping, Craig. 'South Asia/ N. America: New Dwellings and the Past', *Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. Print.

Wandrewala, Armin. *The Turning*. London: Minerva Press, 1995. Print.

The concept of the sacred cannot be understood without the concept of the profane. The two terms have had very different associations in the minds of different people in different periods of history. Religion, culture, individual morality, as also one's politics are some of the factors that shape one's idea of the sacred. French sociologist Durkheim's distinction between the sacred and the profane made in his famous work *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* is probably the most quoted in this dichotomy. For Durkheim the sacred and profane do not necessarily translate into good and evil. The sacred is rather defined as something that is set apart and the profane by its everyday and ordinary nature. Literature perfectly conforms to this sacred-profane binary. It has been set apart like a totem with the tribe of scholars and critics swearing by it. Equally vehemently it has been dismissed as a kind of corrupting influence on the unsuspecting readers right from the period of Plato, the history and culture of banning and burning books amply illustrating this point. Literature is at once both a sacred and a profane entity. Milton and Iqbal can become sacred in some evaluations and Joyce and Manto profane in others, and Shakespeare and Ghalib probably both sacred and profane. What one chooses to consider sacred can very well approximate to somebody else's idea of the profane. The act of choosing makes all the difference. The issue of the sacred and the profane in literature is related to both our beliefs and our institutional practices of reading literature which have not always been the same. It must also be mentioned that since the concept of the sacred is closely identified with the concept of the religious, religion cannot be kept out of view in any discussion of the sacred.

Skipping the debate over reference and difference and the problematic issue of what constitutes the literary and taking up the generally held notions of the literary (I have a bias towards the Russian formalist notion of the literary), the relationship between literature and the sacred can be probed at three levels.

Of the three levels first there is the all important issue of the representation of the religious themes and motifs in works of literature. The impact of religion on writers would also fall in this category. Lot of writers, from Milton to Hopkins, from Mark Twain to T.S.Eliot show the unmistakable influence of religion in their writing. In fact, religion has been so pervasive an entity in human existence that it can be boldly asserted that literature of any country or language would be inconceivable without representing religious motifs and themes. These religious motifs and themes have been exploited time and again for inculcating certain attitudes and values in people.

In many recent discussions of literature, particularly from the left or left of the centre criticism, it has been interpreted as a form of ideology. In fact, literature seems to have fallen to left-oriented vandalism. The view of literature emerging from Marxist criticism-- It has been so powerful that Terry Eagleton (in his book *After Theory*) believes that the entire development of critical theory is a kind of creative engagement with Marxism--sees literature

as a form of ideology. The role of English literature as a form of ideology which filled up for another ideology namely religion has been discussed in great detail. Terry Eagleton's definition of how religion works (and by implication how literature also worked), given in his 1983 book *Literary Theory: An Introduction* is very interesting in its aptness and brevity. Eagleton wrote "Like all successful ideologies, it works much less by explicit concepts or formulated doctrines than by image, symbol, habit, ritual and mythology....Religion, moreover, is capable of operating at every social level: if there is a doctrinal inflection of it for the intellectual elite, there is also a pietistic brand for the masses. It provides an excellent social 'cement' encompassing pious peasant, enlightened middle-class liberal and theological in a single organization" (20). In much the same way, image, symbol and mythology have a very important role in the study of literature. In the context of Urdu poetry it can be seen that it has operated at different levels; both intellectual elites and lowly masses have had their share of intellectual and sensual pleasure derived from Urdu poetry. Thinking about religion and literature operating as ideology it would be interesting to recall the debate on the introduction of English studies in India, a subject which has been dealt with very comprehensively by Gauri Viswanathan in her book *Masks of Conquest*. Viswanathan illustrates the point that in the nineteenth century both utilitarians and the evangelicals had their objections against poetry. The utilitarians, in the manner of Plato, believed that poetry did not have any useful function and that it misrepresented things. The evangelicals, on the other hand, opposed it on the ground of its lack of morality and its overemphasis on sensibility. The difference of opinion between the British government which wanted to stay clear of interfering in the religion of the natives for fear of causing disaffection in their ranks and the missionaries who wanted to propagate Christianity found a chance solution in the teaching of English literature. English literature contained Christianity but in a hidden manner. To understand some writers it was imperative that one turned to the Bible for reference or at least to books on the Bible. Even Romantic literature could be enlisted in the missionary cause. The argument was that the Bible works through the medium of very powerful and evocative imagery. This imagery has not only to be read but felt intensely. Romantic poetry which also uses very evocative imagery extensively prepares the mind to feel the Biblical imagery. In other words a good reader of Romantic poetry is better equipped to soak in the Biblical imagery. Romantic poetry not only stirs the imagination but also provides a training to feel the message of the Bible. In fact, two hundred years later, with practices of reading literature coming under a lot of scrutiny, it can be said that it is not only Romantic poetry but rather poetry in general which is inconceivable without imagery. As such a trained reader of poetry is in a better position to understand Biblical imagery. This also begs the often asked question as to how literature works. It works not by appealing to the discursive reason but by appealing to imagination. In that sense at one level all literature becomes a sort of propaganda, in other words, ideology.

Related to the first level is the second which has two interesting dimensions. Literary works can be read as quasi-religious texts and what is understood as religious literature can very well lend itself to literary interpretations. Structuralist studies of narratology view narratives forming a kind of continuum, extending from myths to the modernist novels. In

other words the simple structure of a myth is one end of the spectrum and the multilinear and convoluted structure of a novel the other. The division of scriptures and secular literature also appears to occupy two opposite ends. However, problems appear on two counts. First sacredness and profanity is to be accounted for by the attitudes of a person rather than being an intrinsic part of things considered sacred and profane. Second the moment we use the word literature for any writing, be it intentionally religious or avowedly secular, the binary of the sacred and the profane starts collapsing. The status of a work is not fixed; it changes with time and literary fashions. Interestingly *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is prescribed today in most literature courses, has often been considered a religious text. Many captains of Industry in the nineteenth century America were excoriated for not having engaged themselves in any intellectual pursuits but some of them claimed to have read *The Pilgrim's Progress*. More importantly though a literary work can offer a lot and in a very complex manner, the treatment of religious themes and motifs in literary works can be selectively taken up by a potential believer-reader. This raises the basic issue of why do we read? Do we read to identify with something or to know the other? Identification with the subject in a work can result in liking selective bits of the text, ignoring the others. The text realized by the reader from the one written by the author, as many approaches ranging from schema theory to phenomenological approach have emphasized, may very easily conform to his idea of the sacred and the profane. Thus there is an interesting assessment of the realization of different texts in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's famous novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a novel which can be read at different levels: "[The novel's] appeal is to all ideologies: leftists like its dealing with social struggles and its portraits of imperialism; conservatives are heartened by the corruption and/or failure of those struggles and with the sustaining role of the family; nihilists and quietists find their pessimism reconfirmed; and the apolitical hedonists find solace in all the sex and swashbuckling" (Bell-Villada 93).

The issue of looking at religious texts as works of literature is often fraught with perils. Both *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are accepted as epics which obviously is a literary genre. They also fit the bill in terms of the characteristics of an epic. The text of both the works has not always remained the same. Both works contain a number of interpolations and many different traditions are fused in the two works. However, both works are considered sacred literature as well. Of particular note is the sacred (religious as well) status of the *Bhagvad Gita* which was an important interpolation in the *Mahabharata*. About the *Ramayana* historian A.L. Basham is of the view that Valmiki conflated the tradition of the banishment of the righteous prince and the conquest of Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka. More importantly Basham holds that many parts in the epic are not supported by historical evidence. To quote his words: "The story of Rama's adventures in exile has thus no historical basis whatever, even if we rationalize his monkey allies into aboriginal tribesmen with a monkey totem" (415). We need no reminding of the potentially dangerous implications of this opinion. A whole lot of people approach the entire *Ramayana* not as an epic but as a scripture. For them it is a sacred text. Tulsidas's *Ram Charit Manas*, which is credited with elevating Rama to his godly status, is the most obvious example of a literary text which has acquired the status of a sacred text.

How does one strike a balance between one's religious beliefs and one's commitment to teaching a literary text. It is not always easy to put aside one's beliefs when one approaches a text like *Ram Charit Manas*. The ideal way to read such texts in the academic set-up would be to focus on the context of the text, its use of language and its literary qualities. When English literature made its beginning, gradually replacing philology, many works would be studied as quasi-religious texts. The hold of religion on the teaching and study of literature in the initial years of the establishment of the subject appears surprising only in retrospect. Robert Scholes mentions the case of Billy Phelps, who worked at Yale University at the turn of the century, for whom there was no contradiction between his religion—he had become a Baptist preacher—and his love of English literature. Scholes writes, "for this representative figure of the professional high-water mark of English as a field of study, there is absolutely no tension between teaching and preaching" (15). After the gradual secularization of ethos in the academic set-up today it is more common to see a teacher of literature hold his beliefs and his reading of literary texts in separate compartments. However, I am not sure if we can generalize this in our set-up. A teacher teaching a text like *Ram Charit Manas* in Indian set-up may behave in a highly individualistic manner. The difference between Islamic studies and theology as teaching subjects in the university set-up may sometimes not be maintained properly. The problem in such cases lies not with the subject but the approach to the subject.

Mention can also be made of the many interpretations of the Quran in English translations. The Quran is considered a work which is unmatched in style, a point about its unmatched status being made in the holy book itself. In fact, the holy book issues a challenge to compose verses in the manner of the Quran. Students of literature can see elements of literature in the Quran. Moreover the Quran does not simply tell stories about the past but rather those stories are important to communicate its lofty meaning. The word for these stories is *Ahsanul Qasus*. However, the plane from literal to metaphorical has resulted in a lot of interpretations of many aspects of the Quran. Nasr Hamed Abu Zaid's humanistic Quranic hermeneutics met with fierce opposition. Even Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation of the Quran (*The Meaning of the Glorious Quran: Translation and Commentary*) which is supposedly one of the most widely read translations of the holy book is faulted on the ground of his reading metaphorical meaning in some places in Quran where a more orthodox view would see something different, something more literal. Thus A.R. Kidwai takes exception to Abdullah Yusuf Ali's view on Islamic eschatology: "Overawed and unnerved by the Western viewpoint, which rules out the possibility of life after death, Abdullah Yusuf Ali is found almost taking recourse to interpreting the Quranic verses dealing with eschatology as 'symbolic', 'allegorical', or 'figurative'. Indicative of this viewpoint is the purport of the Appendix xii entitled, 'The Muslim Heaven' (13). The point is that even when the Quran is understood as a text which has great literary qualities, the question of its literary status cannot be stretched too far. The history of literary interpretations can result in a sort of a free for all,

an anarchy which can hardly be applied when we read a literary text which essentially is a holy book for believers.

The third level in identifying and stressing the sacred concerns the institutional practices that have been followed in the academy. The history of the teaching of literature has not followed a unilinear trajectory in its relationship to what is identified as religious or sacred. It is axiomatic to say that the polysemic nature of language in literature can yield very different interpretations of the same text. Without going into the details of the wide range of interpretations and a wide variety of approaches which have yielded an impossible amount of criticism, I would refer to one particular line which culls sacred meaning, and sacred having a particular kind of orientation in this case, from secular texts. Masoodul Hasan in his book titled *Sufism and English Literature, Chaucer to the Present Age: Echoes and Images* demonstrates how both 'sufic' and 'agnostic' meaning can be extracted from the same text. The most remarkable and undoubtedly original contribution of Hasan is to build up a kind of poetics of sufic interpretation in his book. The voluminous book offers a score of sufic readings of English texts. Shakespeare's Prospero in *the Tempest* is interpreted in sufic light by establishing a comparison of this play with twelfth century writer Bakr Muhammad Ibn-e-Tufail's romance titled *Hayye bin Yakzan*. Prospero's concerns about books and the upbringing of his daughter are similar to Hayye's spiritual enlightenment and suggest, to quote the words of one modern editor of *Hayye*, "how man by the unaided improvement of his faculties may attain to union with the Active Intellect". Hasan also reads sufic connotations in the supposedly Orientalist lines from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* towards the end of the play (thou sitt'st by God himself) when Tamburlaine refers to the Prophet in an ironic manner. Hasan sees in Tamburlaine's words the echo of the idea of *Haqiqat-e-Mohammadi* (the true essence of Muhammad) and *Insan-e-Kamil* (the perfect man) found in the works of Spanish sufi thinker, Ibn Arabi. There are many other sufic readings in the book. Hasan's sufic readings differ entirely from the highly ideological project of Islamization of Knowledge that has gained some adherents in recent years. His sufic readings are a result of his love of humanity, his awareness of living in a world marked by conflict, discord, suspicion and both misinformation and disinformation and his own sincerity to correct the wrong in his own way as a scholar of literature. The result is a rich and pregnant line of inquiry, a new and novel way of approaching texts and a project with immense future possibilities. There can be a debate about forcing a text to yield a particular kind of meaning but this charge was equally valid against many mimetic theories, Marxist in particular but they continued to offer rich interpretations of literary texts.

Whatever one says about the sacred in literature - one may shred it to pieces or one may take it to one's grave—some form of literary training can greatly enhance one's understanding of the world. The sacred mostly presents itself in the image of literature. So even if literature is banished, it will make a rear door entry. The appreciation of this literary-sacred or sacred-literary is achieved by some form of literary training. The world is not about technology alone. It is also about the word. And it is also about discourses that are circulating around us, some good, some bad and some ugly. Literary training may not be greatly valued

today but some understanding of our world which has not been able to obliterate the sacred, can be achieved through literature.

References:

- Basham, A.L. *The Wonder that was India*. New Delhi: Rupa and Co, 1967. Print.
- Bell-Villada, Gene H. García Márquez: *The Man and His Work*. Chapel Hill:University of North Carolina Press, 1990. quoted in Ian Johnston: Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* Jack 2, 2(summer 2004): Web. 14 March 2014.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Second Edition(1983,1996).New Delhi:Maya Blackwell.Indian Reprint 2000. Print.
- , *After Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 2004. Print.
- Hasan, Masoodul. *Sufism and English Literature, Chaucer to the Present Age: Echoes and Images*. New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 2007. Print.
- Kidwai, A.R. "A Critique of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Views". *Muslim World League Journal*. 12:5(February 1985)13-16. Print.
- Scholes, Robert. *The Rise and Fall of English: Reconstructing English as a Discipline*.New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Print.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998. Print.

Muhammad Maroof Shah

The Sacred is largely vetoed in current curricula of English literature in India. This is a little noticed fact of great significance and costs us dearly. Revisiting A. K. Coomaraswamy is what is urgently needed to evolve a more indigenously rooted literary and critical perspective and critique the existing canon. This grand task will be kick-started by creating larger space for Coomaraswamy in linguistic and literature departments in India (and elsewhere as well by implication) at various levels. A few arguments developed below underscore the relevance for the proposed project.

1. Coomaraswamy is arguably the most learned interpreter of arts, enshrining metaphysics in Indian tradition and thus connecting culture to philosophy.

2. The Perennialist school that Coomaraswamy helped to establish has of late been making increasingly significant impact on the intellectual elite of the world and this necessitates more serious engagement with him back home. Amongst the important names influenced by the perennialist school are T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Aldous Huxley, Thomas Merton, Lord Nourbourne, Martin Lings, Syed Hussain Nasr, Titus Burckhardt, Huston Smith, Evola, and back home, Saran, M. H. Askari and Saleem Ahmad and numerous other lesser known figures in studies of art and literature.

3. Coomaraswamy provides a fresh entry into the debate on postcolonialism and gives us an alternative framework not complicit with Western Modernity (of which imperialism becomes a logical and "legitimate" extension) for critiquing the colonialist intellectual construction. It is not only interesting to compare him with Bhaba, Said and Spivak but he could be approached to formulate a new critical paradigm that subsumes and proceeds beyond these and other postcolonial thinkers. On the question of identity of the marginalized or the dejected other in imperialist history, Coomaraswamy is a reference point which enables us to develop models of identity that need not borrow from poststructuralist or similar ideological currents that have a questionable relationship with the forms of thought that they seek to problematize.

4. Coomaraswamy's critique of Enlightenment Project and Secular Modernity needs to be taken seriously, especially after we have witnessed a host of critics of Enlightenment in the West appropriating similar ideas in their analyses and critiques which he has foregrounded in his works. His critique of the problem of authorship and birth of the individual in modern discourse, his analysis of public/private dichotomy and the notion of the rights of the individual and modern democracy, his charges that Enlightenment philosophers misread religion on key points and then misapplied secularized ideas, his studies on the idea of the sacred and violence/sacrifice, all make him an important thinker to be read along with major critics of the modern episteme.

5. His analysis of almost forgotten metaphysical roots of language needs to be kept in background while analyzing key thinkers on the question of metaphysics and language debate

from Heidegger to Derrida, Ricouer and Gadamer. He questions the standard notions current regarding the powers and limitations of language in relation to transcendence.

Let us begin by a few seminal quotations which will help us navigate through the main arguments presented in the paper:

Is it not conceivable that our entire civilization is built upon a false interpretation of man? Or that the tragedy of man is due to the fact that he is a being who has forgotten the question: Who is Man? The failure to identify himself, to know what is authentic human existence leads him to assume a false identity to pretend to be what he is unable to be or to not accept what is at the root of his being. Ignorance about man isn't lack of knowledge but false knowledge.
(Abraham J Heschel)

Art, void of its supernatural typology, fails in its inherent artistic essence.
(Sir George Birdwood)

The Man who never in his Mind & Thoughts traveled to Heaven Is No Artist.
(William Blake)

The productions of all arts are kinds of poetry ('making'), and their craftsmen are all poets.
(Plato)

If the deep learning and strong will of one man can avail anything to lift the curse of Babel today, Dr. Coomaraswamy deserves the gratitude of mankind.
(Graham Carey)

The ultimate subject of all pure or revealing art is God.
(Coomaraswamy and Stella Block)

All the quotations given here by way of introduction make the central point of this paper. Modern Western civilization that has now almost become a global civilization is based on faulty anthropology and it needs prophets like Coomaraswamy if we are to be saved from alienation and ugliness that characterizes it now. There are few scholars of the stature of Coomaraswamy in the 20th century. His central thesis is that we need no new thesis but only better understanding of the ancients. Art is for the glory of God and angels and sanctification of man. Art is not for entertainment. Art is not for exhibition. There are hardly any poets today worth reading. Modern age is largely barren from a cultural point of view. These are rather provocative and "heretical" propositions for the modern audience. The rest of the paper seeks to explain his rationale for them.

Modern age is an age characterized by change in orientation towards transcendence. In theological terms, it is inclined towards atheism or agnosticism and when it is theistic it is not metaphysically grounded but associated with religion and that too often with its exoteric dimension which in itself is a limited and relative plane of reality and quite susceptible to error/deviation when looked from the broader perspective of metaphysics. We can hardly

name any great figure in modern literature that could be called religious in strictly orthodox integral sense of the term. Our age has, most characteristically, treated the question of reality and God in a narrowly rationalistic perspective as it is generally ignorant of the traditional doctrine of God as Reality. It does away with a symbolic view of things and converts the world of wonder and meaning into brute gratuitous things. That is why in the God-forsaken world the problems of meaning and teleology are bound to occur often leading to nihilism and absurdism.

Assumed to be a post-theological and post-metaphysical age, it is quite unfashionable to apply "outmoded" theological and metaphysical principles in criticism of literature. However, the claim of the perennialist authors is that modern man is hardly aware of the traditional wisdom enshrined in pure metaphysics which is not to be confused with the rationally framed post-Aristotelian metaphysics that is the science of being. The knowledge of the Infinite (and, in the perennialist reading, the Greeks were unaware of the notion of the Infinite) is not the prerogative of rational philosophy or reason. They criticize the whole enterprise of Western philosophy for its incomplete or distorted metaphysics. They denounce in very forceful terms the foundations of the project of Modernity with its diverse cultural and literary expressions. The Renaissance is rejected as a devil inspired movement as it cutoff the vertical dimension, which in the form of traditional religious wisdom had tied man to heaven, to the transcendent realm of timeless reality since ages. Post-Enlightenment instrumental rationality that undergirds modern industrial culture with its desecralizing and de-individualizing objectification comes under severe attack complementing the attack of certain postmodernists and left inspired critics like Adorno. Much of what passes for literary criticism today hardly deserves the name of criticism from their perspective. Contemporary literature is largely uninspiring if not outright despairing or pessimistic, and there is hardly in it that freshness that characterized premodern literature. Nihilism has been bounding it. Eliot's portrayal of modern disintegration and absurdist flavour of much of postmodern literature is well known. Heidegger complained of absence of revelatory discourse or hiding of God in the modern world so much so that he denied that modern man can be saved in the given set up. World Wars have shown that the dream of rationalist enlightenment is a mirage. Thus it is undeniable that we are living through difficult times - time of disintegration.

Perennialist have mainly focused on the problems and issues of comparative religion, art and philosophy and have not very seriously dealt with contemporary literature although they have expressed their views here and there in short articles or passages. Full length studies of contemporary literature especially of existentialist and absurdist literature from the perennialist perspective are yet to come. None of the major figures in the perennialist school has extensively dealt with any major contemporary author. However, the perennialist school has been increasingly impacting modern academy and seems to promise a great deal in approaching certain important contemporary dilemmas and crises from a fresh perspective and reorient contemporary criticism towards untrodden

territories. It is with this attempt at reorienting criticism that this paper seeks to engage as a meta-critical and meta-philosophical enterprise.

While Yeats bitterly complained about the Renaissance and the Romantics mourned the loss of Imagination that accessed the Sacred, T. S. Eliot famously described this disintegration as a "dissociation of sensibility"—a radical disconnection between thinking and feeling, mind and heart, although his own solution to the problem and his readings of metaphysical poets in this connection don't seem to have either been heeded or convincing. His idea of Tradition—quite deservedly criticized by perennialist critics such as Hasan Askari—fell on deaf ears perhaps because it was never quite comprehensive or sophisticated enough and was vulnerable to the charge of Eurocentrism. His championing of the Sacred in poetic and critical works has received a good deal of attention, as has Yeats's poetry, but didn't make the desired impact. Nietzsche didn't announce the death of the sacred but a certain conceptualization of the sacred. Despite agnosticism and atheism of major writers in recent history, we find intimations of the sacred here and there in their works. In fact, modern literature is a protest against the forced exile of the sacred or secularization despite the complicity of many writers or their protagonists. Critics have never denied the sacred outright but nevertheless given it scant attention.

William Butler Yeats passionately argued for lost symbolism and imagination while wondering how great literary works can be written when the fount of creative literature in the Spirit is not considered immortal. Blake's defence of Imagination in an age of reason and Shelley's and Leavis' passionate advocacy of poetry and literature in an age that is against its transcendental orientation and William Carlos Williams' diagnosis of "divorce" in modern age too are well known. He meant the "coming apart, not just of marriage, but of all other things that ought to hold together and that might be held together by a vital language and art, a local imagination rising from the ground underfoot." As religion has receded from popular culture, art has been the only undisputed portal for the sacred for the secular age. Heidegger in his "What are Poets for?" argued that it is the poet that can show the way to the fugitive gods or holy. Postmodernists are largely committed to some sort of aestheticism that we can identify as problematic appropriation of the sacred.

A cursory look at the current scenario in English Departments in India shows that they have not been fully cognizant of the debate on the sacred in relation to art. As part of emerging post-colonialist discourse, the sacred got co-opted in politics and ultimately ignored. However, we are now seeing re-emergence of certain tribal/ subaltern/ marginalized cultures and their literatures. Folklore studies too are receiving attention. Translations from other languages or literatures that have mostly positively linked to the idea of sacred have been given new attention by English Departments. All these developments mean that the question of religion and literature or myth and literature or what is called the sacred in contemporary discourse calls for more attention. The fact that the issue of sacred in literature and criticism is emerging—let us take the case of feminism and the sacred as an illustration—

makes it imperative, at least for academic purposes, to take stock of the situation. This explains invoking Coomaraswamy, "the scholar of the Spirit", as he has been rightly called, as the great authority of traditional art forms. English Departments ignore him or are ignorant of him while they teach Indian literature and Indian literary criticism as if there is any higher authority on such things; or advocate the case for postcolonialist approach mentioning him in the margin, if they mention him at all, as if we can find more formidable critique of colonialist epistemic and political project than that presented by him; or import modern and postmodern approaches in criticism without bothering to teach devastating critiques of the same from the metaphysical point of view that perennialist critics like him have been advancing; or teach Plato and Aristotle or some other medieval thinkers in literary criticism without caring to understand the background metaphysics and meaning of myth and symbolism that more careful scholarship like Coomaraswamy's bring for explicating them.

It is our hope that English Departments elsewhere will take up the Indian contribution to the sacred-centric criticism and critics like Abhinavgupta through seminars, anthologies and inclusion in curriculum. I wonder how a scholar, an art historian, a "thinker" who has impacted on some of the best minds of the twentieth century who are in some sense associated with or influenced by the perennialist school, who has inspired ground-breaking works in criticism like Livingstone's *The Traditional Theory of Literature*, who has been not an insignificant contributor to Indian freedom struggle and who has been one of the ablest and keenest minds in the field of dialogue between East and West, religions, philosophies, arts and has the distinction of being one seminal figure in the trinity of discoverers of *Philosophia Perennis*, was a champion of inter-civilizational dialogue for a globalized world, has been marginalized in his homeland that he helped to liberate. I also wonder how in the scenario where almost all great thinkers are critics of Modernity, why there is so little room for Coomaraswamy's critique of it and his championing of the other of Enlightenment rationality or marginalized traditions, archaic viewpoint, mythologies that had been almost discredited, religions that had been read off as a species of primitive speculation and ideology. In an environment where we have had countless seminars on modernism and postmodernism but none – as far as we are informed – about the question of sacred as dominant interpretative and normative idea in criticism let me, at the risk of sounding obsolete or anachronistic, state the case for Coomaraswamy as critic and the dire need for taking metaphysical school of criticism seriously.

Let me introduce the case by quoting a favourite quotation in Coomaraswamy corpus, "Never consider inferior thinkers", to put my case for Coomaraswamy's approach to literary criticism. I think Coomaraswamy is the greatest thinker and art critic and by implication literary critic at least in the domain of principles or normative criticism in the 20th century. Without him we can't appreciate Plato's and Aristotle's criticism with which our textbooks or curricula of criticism begin. Without him English Departments are vulnerable to certain (Post) Modernist/ Marxist prejudices that threaten to dissolve the whole discipline of literary criticism or reductively interpret it. Not only the best of Indian literature but classics of the Western literature refuse to open their treasures to us without the tools such as knowledge of

symbols and metaphysical roots of language and treatment of figures of speech as figures of thought that Coomaraswamy is the best person to talk about. He is the perfect foil to the mess in which we find criticism today, reduced as it is to the Tower of Babel, as critics bring their ideological commitments in their conflicting readings but agreeing in their veto of the sacred.

I will sum up why Coomaraswamy matters in the form of arguments or points that I can only state and not much illustrate due to limitation of space. I state some of points he advocates not as his own but as those of traditional cultures that are ultimately traceable to Heaven/Revelation/Intellection of the sages which are stunning, brilliant and provocative to state my case. There is little scope for our personal comments when it is the Master who is speaking and that too on behalf of Tradition. Coomaraswamy's virtues as a scholar including his precision, his economy of words, his careful choice of words and metaphors, make our task easy as we can bank upon his quotations without much explication on our part. To introduce the shocking nature of what Coomaraswamy pleads for, I quote from a long list of errors he finds in modern art theory or criticism.

Catalogue of Errors in Contemporary View of Art

There is a long list but the following passage sums up the important ones:

Symptomatic abnormalities in our collegiate point of view include the assumption that art is essentially an aesthetic, that is, sensational and emotional, behavior, a passion suffered rather than an act performed; our dominating interest in style, and indifference to the truth and meaning of works of art; the importance we attach to the artist's personality; the notion that the artist is a special kind of man, rather than that everyman is a special kind of artist; the distinction we make between fine art and applied art; and the idea that the nature to which art must be true is not Creative Nature, but our own immediate environment, and more especially, ourselves.

(Coomaraswamy 223)

The following passages further explain some of them:

Whereas we think that an object should be represented in art "for its own sake" and regardless of associated ideas, the tradition assumes that the symbol exists for the sake of its referent, i.e., that the meaning of the work is more important than its looks. Our worship of the symbols themselves is, of course, idolatrous.

(Coomaraswamy 120)

Our modern attitude to art is actually fetishistic; we prefer the symbol to the reality; for us the picture is in the colors, the colors are the picture. To say that the work of art is its own meaning is the same as to say that it has no meaning, and in fact there are many modern aestheticians who assert explicitly that art is

unintelligible.

(Coomaraswamy 141)

Our malady, moreover, is one of schizophrenia. We are apt to ask about a work of art two *separate* questions, "What is it for?" and "What does it mean?" That is to divide shape from form, symbol from reference, and agriculture from culture. Primitive man, whose handiwork displays a "polar balance of physical and metaphysical," could not have asked these separate questions.

(Coomaraswamy 224)

To question the validity of the distinction of fine from applied art, or of the artist from the craftsman, is to question the validity of "that monster of modern growth, the financial-commercial state" on which both artist and teacher now depend for their livelihood. Nevertheless, in addressing a body of educators and curators, one must insist upon their responsibility for the teaching of truth about the nature of art and the social function of the artist.

(Coomaraswamy 224-25)

Take any important book on modern literary criticism and we find everything but the meaning or reference to final causes. We find every reference but none to the First Principles. We find psychological, historical, linguistic, stylistic or formalistic disquisitions but not the reference to the Spirit that transcends both time and psyche. We find great deal of attention to everything save the one thing needful – salvation or deliverance – to which traditional art works have been ultimately linked. We don't find even the delight that has traditionally been a vital aspect of art works. We are great masters of hermeneutics of suspicion and search for absences and gaps, evidences of ideological complicity or involvement of power games and what not but not the instructions for which classics were composed. Myths that undergrid them are "poetic inventions." Art functions are evaluated in terms of calculus of sensations or aesthetic states. Art is connected more to a species of lie than truth. There is no moral or spiritual qualification needed for writing a novel. As man is stripped of the grandeur traditions had invested him with and Promethean man invents counterfeit images of himself in defiance of the Sacred, the task of the artist or critic becomes one of mourning the despair that results and sometimes an apology for this rebellion and new methods of consolation.

Amnesia of Modern Critics

Without the keys provided by traditional school of literary criticism, we are compelled to write off many things for failure to understand them. A glimpse of lost light that explains so many obscure things may be seen in such passages as the following:

Many of the terms of traditional thinking survive as clichés in our everyday speech and contemporary literature, where, like other "superstitions," they have no longer any real meaning for us. Thus we speak of a "brilliant saying" or "shining wit," without awareness that such phrases rest upon an original

conception of the coincidence of light and sound, and of an "intellectual light" that shines in all adequate imagery; we can hardly grasp what St. Bonaventura meant by "the light of a mechanical art." We ignore what is still the "dictionary meaning" of the word "inspired," and say "inspired by" when we mean "stimulated" some concrete object. We use the one word "beam" in its two senses of "ray" and "timber" without realizing that these are related senses, coincident in the expression *rubusigneus* [burning bush], and that we are here "on the track of" (this itself is another expression which, like "hitting the mark," is of prehistoric antiquity) an original conception of the immanence of Fire in the "wood" of which the world is made. We say that "a little bird told me" not reflecting that the "language of birds" is a reference to "angelic communications." We say "self-possessed" and speak of "self-government," without realizing that (as was long ago pointed out by Plato) all such expressions imply that "there are two in us" and that in such cases the question still arises, which self shall be possessed or governed by which, the better by the worse, or vice versa.

In order to comprehend the older literatures we must not overlook the precision with which all such expressions are employed.

(Coomaraswamy 104)

Coomaraswamy as the "Scholar of Spirit"

Coomaraswamy can't be accused of self-righteousness, or as someone who had arrogated to himself the right to pronounce magisterial judgments on contemporary culture. He is best described as a scholar of the Spirit and not of this age or that, this approach or that. His almost prophetic tone can be traced to his mentors who are the best minds and souls (by any standard we can defend) - prophets and saints. As he put it: "I am neither [a saint nor an intellectual giant], but I do say those whose authority I rely on when I speak, have been both." Worth in his preface to *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* sums up the key import and spirit of Coomaraswamy's work in these words:

All of Coomaraswamy's late work is focused on the primacy of the spirit within the human soul, the inborn truth that is inherent in our deepest nature. The immanent spirit, characterized in medieval thought as the synteresis (intellect, conscience) is that "spark of Divine Awareness" which should be the source of all discursive thought and action. While it is sometimes equated simply with conscience in the moral sense, Coomaraswamy notes that it is far more comprehensive than that, for it is the source of self-knowledge and consequently of all doing and all creating. It is the "habit of First Principles," as Coomaraswamy notes, following St. Thomas, habit being understood in the sense of an inborn predilection for truth and understanding. All thought and action, whether intellectual, moral, or creative depends upon direct reference to First Principles, to that innate spark of consciousness in every human soul and cannot depend upon the individuality, the little "I" which does as it pleases. Coomaraswamy's message was twofold: first to make clear the objective and subjective reality of the divine presence within us, as it is

enunciated in all traditions, and secondly to make us draw the inevitable conclusions that this presence has for all aspects of our life and thought.

Against Profane Criticism

Coomaraswamy is up against the whole industry of criticism. He is an "elitist" in his choice of critics he would endorse and quite demanding in the degree and nature of qualifications from a critic. He also severely limits the role of a critic. In fact, from the traditionalist perspective that understands art as imitation, the critic's job becomes quite difficult and specialized. The critic's task is "to evaluate the work itself more in terms of "what the work ought to be" than with "what the author intended it to be." This doesn't mean author's intentions don't count or need not be searched. That is another point on which he took unfashionable position in the heydays of modernist criticism that rejected what it dubbed as intentional fallacy.

Intention/Purpose of Artist

Coomaraswamy in his response to Beardsley and Wimsatt wrote an essay in the form of a letter that forcefully refutes key arguments against what they have called the intentional fallacy. One wonders why it is not widely known. Quoting Wilbur M. Urbun's statement "My meaning is what I *intend* to convey, to communicate, to some other person. Now intentions are, of course, intentions of minds, and these intentions *presuppose* values....Meanings and values are inseparable," he argues that "I say, then, that the critic *can* know what was in the author's mind, if he wants to, and within the limits of what is ordinarily meant by certainty, or "right opinion." But this implies work, and not a mere sensibility." (Coomaraswamy, 2007:113). He also makes it clear that intention ought to be ultimately connected with transcendence or spiritual nature of man. The traditional idea of the purpose of art and thus criticism is helpful in realizing the idea of salvation. As Dante has put it in the well-known words about the *Comedia*: "The purpose of the whole work is to remove those who are living in this life from the state of wretchedness and to lead them to the state of blessedness" (Coomaraswamy, 2007:111). He also refers to Āśvaghoṣa's colophon to the *Saundarānanda*: "This poem, pregnant with the burden of Liberation, has been composed by me in the poetic manner, not for the sake of giving pleasure, but for the sake of giving peace" (Coomaraswamy, 2007: 111). While reminding us that these authors warn us to expect not figures of speech but figures of thought he has no problem in flatly dismissing such opinion as Laurence Housman's ("Poetry is not the thing said, but a way of saying it") or Gerard Manley Hopkins's ("Poetry is speech framed for the contemplation of the mind by way of hearing or speech, framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above the interest of meaning") or Geoffrey Keynes's (who expressed regret that Blake had ideas to express in his otherwise charming compositions.)

(Coomaraswamy, 2007: 111)

The Question of Censorship

Coomaraswamy takes up another traditional position that has been increasingly unpopular i.e. the defence of censorship. The argument he puts forward is simply irrefutable on its own terms.

Art is a kind of knowledge by which we know *how* to do our work (*Sum. Theol.* I.2.57.3), but it does not tell us *what* we need, and therefore ought, to make. So there must be a censorship of manufacture; and if we repudiate a censorship by "guardians" it remains for us to teach our pupils, whether manufacturers or consumers, that it is their responsibility to exercise a collective censorship, not only of qualities, but of kinds of manufacture as well. (225)

Theology is itself an art of the highest order, being concerned with the "arrangement of God," and in relation to the mediaeval works of art stands in the position of formal cause, in ignorance of which a judgment of the art, otherwise than upon a basis of personal taste, remains impossible. (32)

On Aestheticism

Coomaraswamy is better known for his rejection of aestheticism and this sharply differentiates him from most modern critics who are, to a greater or smaller extent, enamoured of aesthetic turn after other sources of values like religion are said to have passed away. As the aesthetic realm is divested of any cognitive reference or sharply differentiated from any cognitive realm in the dominating sensory-rational epistemology, Coomaraswamy seems to be representing an out of fashion point of view:

Aesthetic reactions are nothing more than the biologist's "irritability," which we share with the amoeba. For so long as we make of art a merely aesthetic experience or can speak seriously of a "disinterested aesthetic contemplation," it will be absurd to think of art as pertaining to the "higher things of life." The artist's function is not simply to please, but to present an ought-to-be-known in such a manner as to please when seen or heard, and so expressed as to be convincing. (225)

Qualifications of a Critic

Coomaraswamy has given us, in his iconoclastic essays like "Bugbear of Literacy" and elsewhere, his estimate of modern academy. His advocacy of "primitive" ideal of education that included privileging of oral traditions and understanding of myths as penultimate truth and now largely forgotten symbolism of traditional cultural letters, images, rites and scriptures makes a strong case against cultural criticism dominating now. As he puts it, "What an illiterate Indian or American Indian peasant knows and understands would be entirely beyond the comprehension of the compulsorily educated product of the American public schools." It would imply that our modern critics who dismiss or ignore myths and folk

wisdom and metaphysics of language and symbolist spirit can't be critics of culture or even cultured in the real sense of the term. As culture is ultimately cultivating the soil of our spiritual nature and not the things dealt under so-called cultural criticism or culture industry critics that Coomaraswamy would approve would have to be deeply concerned with the First Principles. Amongst the moderns he observed that Morris will be the only English poet of the nineteenth century who will be valid five hundred years hence. He also resolutely defended Plato's plea for exiling poets that fail to conform to the ideals set forth. He argued that though as an artist one is only concerned with perfection of the art work, he can't be given license to follow his idiosyncracies or make anything he wishes to make as he is also a man and thus needs to conform to the absolute values.

A critic should sympathetically penetrate the universe of the artist - in the traditional setting every literary or cultural product is informed by First Principles and there is no such thing as a Marxist or deconstructionist or feminist reading exposing certain hidden ideologies. There is no confusion of tongues as the community as a whole shares or participates in a common symbolic universe, castes are not confounded as there is a notion of *Homo hierarchicus* against what perennialists call democratic prejudice and thus proliferation of individual opinions and perspectives. A traditional critic unearths not hidden power games but points out how far the intention of the artist has been realized. This doesn't mean that critical perspectives have no positive role but only that they will not be absolutized. A traditional culture will put first things first. Its artists seek primarily their salvation through their work. They are not paid for exhibitions as art works are not for sale, or for museums. One needs to read the whole of *Oriental, or Christian Philosophy of Art* to taste the provocative but convincing arguments that can only be accepted or one may forward one's inability to embrace it, not for want of intellectual depth but for this or that exigency.

Coomaraswamy on Myths

In his *Hinduism and Buddhism* he defined and defended myth as penultimate truth of which all experience is a temporal reflection and of timeless validity and true everywhere and nowhere. He dismisses the view that it is a poetic invention (Coomaraswamy, 2012:7). And it is amply demonstrated that 'mythology' - the body of inherited myths in any culture - is "an important element of literature," and that literature is "a means of extending mythology". And thus we need to see or read literary works as 'mythopoeic', tending to "create or re-create certain narratives which human beings take to be crucial to their understanding of their world" and thus cultural and literary criticism involve 'mythography', or the interpretation of myth (Coupe 2009:4), it hardly needs to be argued why our approach to myth is so crucial to proper understanding of not only traditional literatures or classics that are suffused with myths but also of modern works that often engage with myth creation or appropriation of previous myths. Literary criticism hinges on proper understanding of myths in relation to metaphysics.

Commenting on Levy Bruhl's statement "For the primitives, the mythical world really existed. Or rather it still exists" he says:

One might add that it will exist forever in the eternal now of the Truth, unaffected by the truth or error of history. A myth is true now, or was never true at all....In a normal society one no more "thinks for oneself" than one has a private arithmetic [cf. Augustine, *De ordinell*.48]. In a proletarian culture one does not think at all, but only entertains a variety of prejudices, for the most part of journalistic and propagandistic origin, though treasured as one's "own opinions." A traditional culture presumes an entertainment of ideas, in which a private property is impossible. "Where the God(*sc.* Eros) is our teacher, we all come to think alike"

(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* XVII.3, 199)

He approvingly quotes Levy Bruhl's statement:

We civilized men have lost the Paradise of the 'Soul of primitive imagery [*Urbildsseele*]. We no longer live among the shapes which we had fashioned within: we have become mere spectators, reflecting them from without." he moves on to comment: To have lost the art of thinking in images is precisely to have lost the proper linguistic of metaphysics and to have descended to the verbal logic of "philosophy." (230-231)

Cognitive Element in Art

Modern critical theories, generally speaking, assume little cognitive element in art. Art is neither revelation nor insight that leads to certain opening to higher knowledge. Art is akin to lie as Nietzsche claimed. Art doesn't give truth but gives voice to all kinds of contradictory truths - a polyphony of voices that can't be reconciled in any court. Art defamiliarizes the world and thus could be said to lead to vague mystery that defies or embarrasses intelligence and is hardly a vehicle for transcendence in the traditional sense. It is not to be denied that here and there we find in modern criticism acknowledgement of art's truly creative and illuminating role. Some of the greatest modern philosophers including Heidegger and Whitehead clearly recognized the cognitive though not discursively cognitive function of art. Postmodernists while sceptical of epistemic enterprise as such do concede some illuminating or "salvific" role to art are far from being close to the ideal of unity of aesthetic and cognitive faculties that Coomaraswamy champions. Coomaraswamy minces no words in stating the cognitive value of art as he is ultimately for salvific function of art. Batting for ancient and medieval point of view on art he says those for whom "Art has to do with cognition" and apart from knowledge amounts to nothing, men who could say that "the educated understand the rationale of art, the uneducated knowing only what they like," men for whom art was not an end, but a means to present ends of use and enjoyment and to the final end of beatitude equated with the vision of God whose essence is the cause of beauty in all things. (Coomaraswamy, 2004:173).

As for Coomaraswamy "art is an intellectual virtue," "beauty has to do with cognition." (Coomaraswamy, 2007: 88) he is able to show, not just argue, that "artis a kind of knowledge, not anything that can be seen, but akin to the soul and prior to the body and the

world. We can properly say that not only "Love" but "Art" and "Law" are names of the Spirit (Coomaraswamy, 2004:20)

Artist's Anonymity

Modernity has helped nurture a pathological formation of ego, a narcissistic subjectivity, a perverse passion for expression, a vainglorious imagination that exchanges name and fame for stillness of spirit that characterized contemplative traditions. The individual is commodified and one's saleability in the market is in terms of success of consumption of work. In this context Coomaraswamy's ideal of anonymity is simply something that questions the whole discourse that has no value for man or his dignity per se but weighs him in terms of the function in the social machine. Remembering the lessons from ancients becomes as such quite important if we are to seek home by learning to listen, by attuning to the Universal, by submitting to the Transcendent Principle that grounds our real self. A genuine artist is required to escape from personality and has no idea what copyright means or what is the need to exhibit his work. To quote Coomaraswamy:

The artist was usually, and unless by accident, anonymous, signing his work, if at all, only by way of guarantee: it was not who, but what was said, that mattered. A copyright could not have been conceived where it was well understood that there can be no property in ideas, which are his who entertains them: whoever thus makes an idea his own is working originally, bringing forth from an immediate source within himself, regardless of how many times the same idea may have been expressed by others before or around him. (174)

Coomaraswamy has an illuminating essay "Shaker Furniture" that contrasts modern attitudes with traditional. A passage is reproduced from the same illustrate the thesis of anonymity.

The style of Shaker furniture, like that of their costume, was impersonal; it was, indeed, one of the "millennial laws" that "No one should write or print his name on any article of manufacture, that others may hereafter know the work of his hands." And this Shaker style was almost uniform from beginning to end; it is a collective, and not an individualistic expression. (95)

A further comment in a footnote quotes traditional authorities "I do nothing of myself. May it be known to both religious and profane that 'This was my work'... That is a notion befitting an infant" and lines from Shaker hymns go like this: "But now from my forehead I'll quickly erase/ The stamp of the Devil's great I." (Coomaraswamy, 2007:95)

Art and the Sacred

The question of art vis-a-vis the sacred and admirable exposition of traditionalist view has been formulated by a number of scholars writing in the vein of Coomaraswamy including Schuon, Burckhardt, Nasr and others. Brian Keeble's *God and Work: Aspects of Art and Tradition* (2009) and M A Lakhani's *The Timeless Relevance of Traditional Wisdom* (2010) are notable in this regard. I quote from their works as they have succinctly paraphrased the

traditionalist position. But first the Master, Frithjof Schuon, for a succinct statement of traditional position. "Art in the broadest sense is the crystallization of archetypal values" and "Art is the quest for – and the revelation of – the center, within us as well as around us" (Schuon, n.d. 30). He characterizes the sacred and its rights in his inimitable and grand style as:

the interference of the uncreate in the created, of the eternal in time, of the infinite in space, of the supraformal in forms; it is the mysterious introduction into one realm of existence of a presence which in reality contains and transcends that realm and could cause it to burst asunder in a sort of divine explosion. The sacred is the incommensurable, the transcendent, hidden within a fragile form belonging to this world; it has its own precise rules, its terrible aspects, and its merciful qualities; more over any violation of the sacred, even in art, has incalculable repercussions. Intrinsically the sacred is inviolable, and so much so that any attempted violation recoils on the head of the violator. (4)

The sense of the sacred is the innate consciousness of the presence of God: it is to feel this presence sacramentally in symbols and ontologically in all things. Hence the sense of the sacred implies a kind of universal respect, a kind of circumspection before the mystery of animate and inanimate creatures. (23)

Sacred art is made as a vehicle for spiritual presences, it is made at one and the same time for God, for angels, and for man; profane art on the other hand exists only for man and by that very fact Art is an activity, an exteriorization, and thus depends by definition on a knowledge that transcends it and gives it order; apart from such knowledge, art has no justification: it is knowledge which determines action, manifestation, form, and not the reverse. (29)

The error in the thesis of "art for art's sake" really amounts to supposing that these are relativities which bear their adequate justification within themselves, in their own relative nature, and that consequently there are criteria of value inaccessible to pure intelligence and foreign to objective truth. This error involves abolishing the primacy of the spirit and its replacement either by instinct or taste, thus by criteria that are either purely subjective or else arbitrary. We have already seen that the definition, laws and criteria of art cannot be derived from art itself, that is, from the competence of the artist as such; the foundations of art lie in the spirit, in metaphysical, theological and mystical knowledge, not in knowledge of the craft alone nor yet in genius, for this may be just anything; in other words the intrinsic principles of art are essentially subordinate to extrinsic principles of a higher order. (11)

Perfect art can be recognized by three main criteria: nobility of content – this being a spiritual condition apart from which art has no right to exist – then exactness of symbolism or at least, in case of profane works of art, harmony of composition, and finally purity of style or elegance of line and colour, we can

discern with the help of these criteria the qualities and defects of any work of art whether sacred or not. (39)

According to the "traditional" philosophy of art that Coomaraswamy traces, all art is a kind of knowledge that begins in God, who creates all things existent from the *nothing* (no-thing, so called, that is), the ineffable reason of divine ideas of things prior to their expression in the phenomenal world. (Keeble, 2009: 7)

Coomaraswamy introduced his method in the essay "The Nature of Buddhist Art" regarding the approach to sacred art thus:

Remember that we are pilgrims come from some great distance to see God; that what we see will depend upon ourselves. We are to see, not the likeness made by hands, but its transcendental archetype; we are to take part in a communion. We have heard the spoken Word, and remember that "He who sees the Word, sees Me"; we are to see this Word, not now in an audible but in a visible and tangible form.... The image is of one Awakened: and for our awakening, who are still asleep. The objective methods of "science" will not suffice; there can be no understanding without assimilation; to understand is to have been born again. (145)

On Aestheticism

Coomaraswamy provides perhaps the most trenchant critique of aestheticism in our times. Reducing art to aesthetic experience and the later to certain state, primarily emotional or sensory and ignoring the connection of it to moral and intellectual domains is what Coomaraswamy can't accept. To quote him:

Our private (*idiōtikos*) and sentimental (*pathētikos*) contrary heresy (i.e., view that we prefer to entertain) which makes of works of art an essentially sensational experience, is stated in the very word "aesthetics," *aisthēsis* being nothing but the biological "irritability" that human beings share with plants and animals. The American Indian cannot understand how we "can like his songs and not share their spiritual content." We are, indeed, just what Plato called "lovers of fine colors and sounds and all that art makes of these things that have so little to do with the nature of the beautiful itself" (*Republic* 476B). The truth remains, that "art is an intellectual virtue," "beauty has to do with cognition." (88)

God as Master Craftsman

Coomaraswamy advocates a divine model for artist. Far from defying the World of Forms true artists are required to contemplate the same and draw models of what they have seen. Man's perfection lies in imitating and what distinguishes Faustian and Promethean modernism is imitating lower things or what doesn't transcend man with all his limitations.

One's self becomes the source of values. One's emotions are expressed. Personality is not escaped. Needless to comment that uglification of modern art and cities and disappearance of great beauty that characterized traditional crafts follows when the model to be imitated is not what transcends man and grounds all earthly beauty. As Coomaraswamy puts it:

All tradition has seen in the Master Craftsman of the Universe the exemplar of the human artist or "maker by art," and we are told to be "perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Compare our artists depicting the ugly or art tailored to interests of entertainment industry. That the Shakers were doctrinally Perfectionists is the final explanation of the perfection of Shaker workmanship; or, as we might have said, of its "beauty." (93)

The artist, as Coomaraswamy time and again reminds us, in traditional understanding, copies in his material the image he beholds in his intellect.

Revaluations by Coomaraswamy

We are familiar with Leavis's revaluations and now a proliferating industry of decanonizing. Writers are in and out, great and not so great according to the perspective or choice of a critic. We are also familiar with Eliot's revaluations also. Ironically Leavis uses the same term Tradition as Coomaraswamy did for placing his revaluations in perspective. We have other formulations that accuse great classics of prejudices, of false consciousness, of this or that ideological content or complicity with power games. Looking at previous works with the lenses of certain critical perspective that privileges such notions as class, structure, form, ambiguity etc., there have been different canons. With psychoanalytic and deconstructionist approach we have quite another revaluation of literary works. Coomaraswamy's revaluations or his recommended canon needs consideration as it has the advantage of presenting a canon on which ancient and medieval critics of all traditions and a few modern perceptive critics of Modernity would in principle agree. Regarding his revaluations Livingston notes:

Viewing the Renaissance as introducing an age of individualism that produced few great thinkers and artists in the tradition of the *Philosophia Perennis*, Coomaraswamy seldom refers to the well-known writers, artists, and critics after the Middle Ages. One writer that he often cites with complete approval as a foremost representative of the Tradition is William Blake, whose doctrine of art makes him, as he notes, "Eckhart's nearest and natural descendant." (73)

Point for point, in fact, the essential congruence of Blake and the other Traditionalists could be demonstrated, as Coomaraswamy knew. As for the theories of various others e.g., Coleridge, Schelling, Carlyle which may have some kinship with Traditional doctrine, Coomaraswamy ignores them. Most modern thinkers he ruled out with his magisterial motto, "Do not consider the inferior philosophers." In any event he found sufficient support for perennial doctrine from the more canonical thinkers who were not tainted by "modernism" and heterodoxy. (44)

Inspiration

If Coomaraswamy's account of inspiration is correct it follows that none of the great writers can be a disbeliever in transcendence. All great art works testify to their transcendent source. It would mean that the great creative flights and treasures that Imagination can make us available are denied to those who take humanistic rationalist secularizing view of man. How can those who disbelieve in First Principles get inspiration? Coomaraswamy would seem to ask. As Livingstone quotes and explains his views on the issue:

The concept of inspiration, which a modern professor typically believes is "hardly a subject for serious literary criticism," is defined most rigorously by Coomaraswamy. He deprecates the common misuse of the term e.g., "Such-and-such an artist was inspired by the rain or by his materials" and insists that, properly speaking, one of the dictionary definitions is to be preferred: "a supernatural influence which qualifies men to receive and communicate divine truth." In the perennial Tradition, he writes, "it is always by the Spirit that a man is thought to be inspired." For him, it would seem, the invocations of the Muses and the references to inspiration in poets like Homer and Hesiod are not at least, were not originally empty formulas or mere literary conventions but genuine expressions of a belief in supernatural aid "breathed into" men. (44)

Critic as Karma Yogi

In the commoditized world poets and critics are paid for their job. They do it for money primarily. But for traditions it should be karma yoga for him/her, an ideal I wonder which can't even be conceived today though it continues to be true for certain dedicated individuals in and outside institutions. Previously it was the rule, now it is an exception. As Coomaraswamy reminds us: "Every vocation was a priesthood." And: "Everyman is an artist". One can only imagine the degeneration in the meaning of both vocation and priesthood in Joyce who informs us he had to renounce priesthood for artistic vocation. The very fact that he felt two were incompatible speaks more of modern malady than malady of religion that affected even such a seminal modern mind.

Roger Lipsey, in his introduction to *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought: The Traditional View of Art* thus sums up Coomaraswamy's life and work as an illustration of following swadharma. "He also considered his scholarship and literary output as the fulfillment of his dharma and a karma-yoga—the way of works by which one perfects one's soul—for him the Benedictine principle that *laborare est orare* truly applied."

Understanding Mimesis

We find a lot of discussion on mimesis in literary criticism but none that matches Coomaraswamy's elaboration and defence making most of the routine criticisms of the theory irrelevant. In his last essay "Athena and Hephaistos" we find his exegesis of the idea that connects it to "two modes of being":

Imitation, the distinctive character of all the arts, is accordingly two-fold, on the one hand the work of intellect (*nous*) and on the other of the hands (*cheir*). These two aspects of the creative activity correspond to the "two in us", viz. our spiritual or

intellectual Self and sensitive psycho-physical Ego, working together (*synergoi*). The integration of the work of art will depend upon the extent to which the Ego is able and willing to serve the Self, or if the patron and the workman are two different persons, upon the measure of their mutual understanding.

As Iredell Jenkins has pointed out, the modern view that "art is expression" has added nothing to the older and once universal (e.g., Greek and Indian) doctrine that "art is imitation," but only translates the notion of "imitation, born of philosophical realism, into the language and thought of metaphysical nominalism"; and "since nominalism destroys the revelation doctrine, the first tendency of modern theory is to deprive beauty of any cognitive significance." The older view had been that the work of art is the demonstration of the invisible form that remains in the artist, whether human or divine; that beauty has to do with cognition; and that art is an intellectual virtue. (117)

Folklore and Metaphysics

Despite recent proliferation of folk lore studies and native or regional languages and vogue of translations from local literatures there lurks enormous ignorance of metaphysics of folklore. Coomaraswamy's timely reminders need to be heeded. And if we heed them, folklore criticism needs to be largely rewritten.

The content of folklore is metaphysical. Our failure to recognize this is primarily due to our own abysmal ignorance of metaphysics and of its technical terms. We observe, for example, that the primitive craftsman leaves in his work something unfinished, and that the primitive mother dislikes to hear the beauty of her child unduly praised; it is "tempting Providence," and may lead to disaster. That seems like nonsense to us. And yet there survives in our vernacular the explanation of the principle involved: the craftsman leaves something undone in his work for the same reason that the words "to be finished" may mean either to be perfected or to die. Perfection is death: when a thing has been altogether fulfilled, when all has been done that was to be done, potentiality altogether reduced to act (*kṛtakṛtyah*), that is the end: those whom the gods love die young. This is not what the workman desired for his work, nor the mother for her child. It can very well be that the workman or the peasant mother is no longer conscious of the meaning. (192)

He approvingly quotes Raglan's *The Hero*: "the literature of the folk is not their own production, but comes down to them from above ... the folktale is never of popular origin." (Coomaraswamy, 2007: 199). He further remarks:

the folklore ideas are the form in which metaphysical doctrines are received by the people and transmitted by them. In its popular form, a given doctrine may not always have been understood, but for so long as the formula is faithfully transmitted it remains understandable; "superstitions," for the most part, are no mere delusions, but formulae of which the meaning has been forgotten and are therefore called meaningless - often, indeed, because the doctrine itself has been forgotten. (210)

Rites and Literature

Livingston lucidly sums up Coomaraswamy's analysis of relationship between rites and literature. To quote him:

Coomaraswamy's suggestive analysis of mythical and religious rites is posited upon this doctrine of the two-fold nature of man. Rites are usually sacrifices. The participant in one of the archetypal rites commits ritual suicide or otherwise sacrifices himself; he slays or abandons, temporarily at least, his identity as an individual to become, so far as he is able, that higher being God or Hero whose actions he imitates. After the rite is over, he returns to his ordinary condition, though possibly much uplifted by his imitation of divine actions. Coomaraswamy recognizes that the great Traditional rites, which enact the primordial myths, are among mankind's most efficacious means for self transcendence and self-realization. In the light of the Traditional doctrine of man's final end, works of art - literary as well as others are deemed useful to the extent that they enable a man truly to know himself or, as Coomaraswamy says, to lose or to find himself, these being the same. (135)

Why Art is not entertainment?

Art has been reduced, especially in certain more popular forms, to cheap entertainment that distracts the audience or provides certain escape from humdrum of work or killing time or certain erotic, gossiping, funny exercise. Coomaraswamy reminds us of ancient definition of art as skill of doing work and seeing work as gift or blessing of heaven. To quote his authorities and his own comments:

"For all well-governed peoples there is a work enjoined upon each man which he must perform" (*Republic* 405C). "Leisure" is the opportunity to do this work without interference (*Republic* 370C). A "work for leisure" is one requiring undivided attention (Euripides, *Andromache* 552). Plato's view of work in no way differs from that of Hesiod, who says that work is no reproach but the best gift of the gods to men (*Works and Days* 295-296). Whenever Plato disparages the mechanical arts, it is with reference to the kinds of work that provide for the well-being of the body only, and do not at the same time provide spiritual food; he does not connect culture with idleness. (4)

This is, then, by no means an aesthetic or psychological experience but implies what Plato and Aristotle call a *katharsis*, and a "defeat of the sensations of pleasure" or pain. *Katharsis* is a sacrificial purgation and purification "consisting in a separation, as far as that is possible, of the soul from the body"; it is, in other words, a kind of dying, that kind of dying to which the philosopher's life is dedicated. The Platonic *catharsis* implies an ecstasy, or "standing aside" of the energetic, spiritual, and imperturbable self from the passive, aesthetic, and natural self, a "being out of oneself" that is a being "in one's right mind" and real Self, that "in-sistence" that

Plato has in mind when he "would be born again in beauty inwardly," and calls this a sufficient prayer. (6-7)

Reading Literature with Coomaraswamy

How little we comprehend Classics or how much we need to ignore or explain away may best be appreciated by reading them with Coomaraswamy. Symbolism that is the key to their meaning is now largely forgotten. We dismiss their invocation to the Muses or prayer for inspiration from a perspective we are condemned to take as we have banished the supernatural. For instance, what about explicit invoking of the supernatural or awareness of the need of purification for an artist in Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st:
What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
So much the rather thou Celestial light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge & disperse, that I may see & tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight

What about Shakespeare whose whole universe is suffused with the supernatural? What about Classical Greek tragedies that owe all of their power to certain moral and spiritual order that transcends merely mortal aspirations, dreams and vanities that heroes embody? What about salvation or deliverance or transcendence that is the key function of traditional literature? What about the doctrine of two selves that permeates almost all great works as pointed out by Coomaraswamy? What about figures of thought that underlie figures of speech? What an impoverishment it constitutes to apply tools of psychoanalysis, ideology critique or political historicist reading or exhort merely formal structures and their play for approaching - or should one say dissolving - the core meaning of literary works. It is sad to note how extremely little attention has been given to Coomaraswamy by our critics. For me this shows only their deficiencies. They have bypassed him and chosen not to see themselves or important new critical works in the mirror provided by him. Coomaraswamy speaks on behalf of the ancient timeless school of perennial philosophy that he is able to trace everywhere and apply, in principle, to all great works of art. It is criminal negligence on the part of mainstream academia that so few works have been devoted to this greatest of art critics, peerless scholar of world literature, and a perceptive thinker who refused to call opinions thought. Such brilliant works as *The Traditional Theory of Literature* expounding Coomaraswamy's work need to be prescribed and new school of criticism that we may call traditionalist school taught alongside other schools of criticism. How this criticism will make a difference may be understood by few pieces of such criticism that put the case for Coomaraswamy and his readings.

And in an age when the Tradition declines and men become more concerned with emotions and aesthetic surfaces than with knowledge, it becomes especially necessary that critic-scholars like Coomaraswamy give some preparation often not needed by persons of similar capacity when the works were executed for initiation into the mysteries and manifold meanings of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, and the writings of Plato, Plotinus, St. Augustine, Rumi, Dante, Eckhart, and Blake to name several representative works and writers of a Tradition dedicated to imparting principal knowledge. A critic like Coomaraswamy makes our minds amenable to their idiom, symbolism, depths of meaning, and profound life-giving qualities. Not only by his fruitful method but by his revelations he can also make us aware of the richness of our own English literature, possibly in ways little suspected.

(Livingstone 121)

The erotic art of India, the many-limbed statues of the Gods, the dark sayings of Heraclitus, the meanings hidden behind the veil of the strange verses of Dante, the daring flights of Eckhart, the manic effusions of Nietzsche all these and much more that has repelled a good many persons he approached with that characteristic courage and intelligence of the hero who discovers secrets hid from the generality of mankind.

(Livingston 122)

If there is anything instructive in his practice of criticism, it is his willingness to understand; in this he is markedly different from the scholars and critics who do not perceive their own lack of competence and who persist in treating some of the greatest achievements of man's artistry in terms of their own limitations and prejudices.

(Livingston 122)

Although we are all familiar to a certain extent with the symbolism of the sea, a quintessential study, such as Coomaraswamy's "The Sea," makes us aware of depth of meaning we never before considered. For instance, the grandeur of a small poem of Herrick, "Eternitie," is revealed in a manner that few have suspected. To study this slender piece in the light not only of the essay "The Sea" but also of Coomaraswamy's Time and Eternity in which it is quoted is to understand that a "minor poet" can write a great poem when he uses traditional symbols that are evocative of resonances that can enchant one's soul.

(Livingston 127)

Coomaraswamy's theory of literature (coherent as it is with the *Philosophia Perennis*) reveals the amazing unanimity of thought throughout the world concerning the arts. There has been discovered in Coomaraswamy's works a perennial doctrine of art that has persisted for millennia, subscribed to by millions of men unknown to us, as well as by many of the greatest philosophers and artists of the race. For those who respect the greatness of the Buddha, Sankaracarya, Plato,

Aristotle, Plotinus, Dante, St. Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart, and Blake, for example, and revere some, at least, of the scriptures and myths of mankind, Coomaraswamy's thought may well seem invested with authority, rigor, and great explanatory power.

(Livingston 131-132)

Bringing the life-giving boons associated with the inspired stranger of myth and folk tale, Coomaraswamy not only opens up the riches of the world's literature that many may not have suspected, but he also gives us another perspective by which to look on "English literature as a road to wisdom"

(Livingston, 1962:132)

Coomaraswamy's theory has considerable power, as we have already seen, to illuminate some of the issues that concern contemporary critics. For instance, every one of the many topics included in *The Critics Notebook* (a composite of quotations from modern critics), edited by Robert Wooster Stallman, is treated by Coomaraswamy; furthermore, Coomaraswamy's pronouncements are supported by his usual authorities, who may be able to clarify some of the issues by their characteristic emphases and insights.

(Livingston 133)

Essays on "courtly love" and "the cosmic dance" in other traditions, for example, because they are so reverently and learnedly handled, could possibly deepen one's understanding of the true substance of these motifs in English literature.

(Livingston 134)

To teach us and to tell us what and how to read few can do better than Ananda Coomaraswamy. After receiving from the study of his works a truly liberal education, one can turn to Plato, Dante, Eckhart, Shakespeare, Milton, and a great host of equal and lesser figures, as well as to Holy Writ, with an enhanced understanding that will perceive saving truths overlooked before.

(Livingston 144)

Compare Richards, formalists, postmodernists, Marxists on the question of cognitive value of art, of salvific value of it, on deeper meanings and symbolism of traditional literary works with Coomaraswamy and one wonders why we care so little about such a grand, comprehensive vision that captures the essence of all traditional arts, religions and philosophies and is able to secure the unity of the aesthetic and moral and cognitive dimensions. Our perennialists complain of absence of beauty in poetry and thus poetry as such in the modern world. They also explain why this is so and how things could have been different. Let us note what Schuon has to say regarding the prospects of recovering meaning in the desacralizing industrial culture and absence of beauty in poetry.

Every man loves intelligible work and work well done. Now, industrialism has robbed the people of both things: on the one hand of religion, denied by scientism from which industry derives, and rendered implausible by the inhuman character of the ambience of machinery; and on the other hand of the crafts, replaced precisely by machines; so much so, that in spite of all the "social doctrines" of the Church and the nationalistic bourgeoisie, there is

nothing left for the people which can give meaning to their life and make them happy. (28)

Contemporary poetry is mostly lacking in beauty and sincerity; it is lacking in beauty for the simple reason that the souls of the poets—or rather of those who fabricate what takes the place of poetry—are devoid of it, and it is lacking in sincerity on account of the artificial and paltry searching for unusual expressions which excludes all spontaneity. It is no longer a question of poetry but of sort of cold and lifeless work of jewellery made up of false gems or of a meticulous elaboration which is at the very antipodes of what is beautiful and true. Since the muse no longer gives anything, because it is rejected *a priori*,—for the last thing which a man of today would accept is to appear naive,—vibrations are provoked in the soul and it is cut into fragments, Whatever the caprice of the moment, it is illogical to cultivate an. (108)

Implications of Coomaraswamy's Approach

What is being taught in the name of literary criticism today is quite an impoverished and even distorting exercise. There are hardly any critics that Coomaraswamy would readily recommend. Even the great T. S. Eliot has been rather harshly criticized by perennialists. Literary criticism that largely vetoes transcendence fails in its key task. Classics can't be understood except in the light of metaphysics and symbolism that Coomaraswamy is able to foreground and invoke with great ease. Modern criticism is blind to transcendence or unable to take delight in works informed by transcendence and this incapacitates it from real understanding of it. If ancients, medieval and contemporary sages of all traditions are right regarding the centrality of the sacred for man and his creative expressions including literature, modern criticism is terribly misdirected, terribly impoverished. In fact, many of our greatest contemporary writers are witness to the reality of the sacred in their writings and their most inspiring passages owe compelling power to intimations of the sacred. The attempt to secularize the literature is like dissecting a flower to appreciate its beauty. Man can't live without the sacred. Literature is evidence of it. The tone of modern literature is despairing precisely because meaning and joy that man hankers after instinctively are denied in a world without sacred. And heroes are required to be happy even if it is the Sisyphean punishment that they are required to endure or choose. Coomaraswamy's approach throws off a host of questions to those modern critics who plead for taking leave of transcendence as traditionally understood and build on the foundations of "unyielding despair" a new world. How can we explain the great reticence about the ancients for whom God is present in every breath they breathe and the question of suicide hardly entertainable? How they write of for judge dozens of traditional civilizations and millennia of human experience in declaring that man has come of age and discarded illusions and should refuse to look heavenward or into the depths of his own being where all the heavens and gods reside? How do they discount the great architects of traditional civilizations who have built great cultures? How come the audacity to correct or advise the profoundest thinkers, artists, saints and prophets of traditional cultures that have all taken transcendence to be a reality? Are great epics, scriptures, temples and other magnificent architectural achievements, music and other art forms and traditional sciences that have

sustained them for centuries or millennia been the abiding contribution of these civilizations to humanity products of basic epistemic errors and flawed ontology? Are religions and everything associated with them that include almost every cultural activity in traditional civilizations that have traditionally grounded human search for values and meaning, products of wrong speculation or fear? Are great aesthetic systems that celebrate beauty that saves by virtue of being a royal road to transcendence and a testimony that this world is not indifferent to our deepest aspiration for beauty and joy simply a product of faulty psychology and juvenile romanticism? Is contemplative life that has vivified not only a galaxy of saints and monks of varied traditions and inspired great artists simply a doomed search for essence of the self as Beckett would have us believe? What about the great mystics who report that in the cave of their hearts or depths of their being they have found eternity of unalloyed joy and thus evidence of a basically benign reality at the heart of the universe? Where do they place intelligence itself that judges something absurd presupposing something that is not absurd? How can they disregard almost all great traditional philosophers who are unanimous on the primacy of wisdom accessible to intellectual intuition or the accessibility of the Real to heart or a galaxy of artists who thought they copied their masterpieces by visualizing Platonic Forms? How do they reject experience or testimony of countless believers who found access to reality to certain extent through the contemplation of the traditional symbols, and of mystics of all traditions and all hues who positively reported about heavens (their own states of higher consciousness, of course) and as a result got the peace that passes understanding and dissolved all questions including absurdity or hysterical angst if it lurks somewhere? Closer home, how can we explain away countless examples of works of Holy Spirit that sustain life? For instance, mothers who prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner for the children being motivated by nothing but love that Jesus identified with God and with which the Holy Spirit vivifies believers (reductionist psychologism may not countenance it but none including the psychologists has ever been blind to the power of love to lift us and its joy and in perennialist pneumatology and ontology joy is an attribute of the Real, of transcendence). The question, in short, is should we side with the great founders and sustainers of civilizations in whose anthropology the Transcendent Principle has the supreme importance and countless other witnesses of the Spirit or with those who proudly declare that only modern man is mature and assert that transcendence is an illusion? Shouldn't we, with Heschel, question the whole basis of anthropology on which our entire civilization is built?

Conclusion

Coomaraswamy emerges as a passionate advocate of the norm - what truly has been the norm for ages, for all traditions and has been endorsed by scriptures and the best of minds across cultures. In the light of this norm we can arrive at what ought to be the canon in English Departments and what and how to approach modern literature and criticism. It is not that I am pleading for including Coomaraswamy and other critics of traditional school but something more that would lead to reversing the present colonialist, secularizing, desecralizing forces that have been dominating. Mine is not a plea for rejecting other tools or schools but putting them in perspective. If the task of a critic is to introduce us to the best that has been thought, to instruct, to remove obstacles in the way of self-knowledge, to educate

our taste, to lead us to appreciate or move towards perfection, to make clear connection between beauty and truth in a work of art, to allow Being to reveal itself, to help in catharsis, to achieve the objectives that Joyce proposes in *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, to defamiliarize the world, to respectfully approach the mystery at the heart of things and not to objectify in order to manipulate it, identify the prejudices that our ego, our personality, our sentiments, our individual likes and dislikes, our self-centric projects and thus forces that don't ethically assimilate the other, that marginalize, then Coomaraswamy has a point. Coomaraswamy invites us to a feast of spirit that works of art provide. He seeks to shock us out of our ordinary complacent view or mode of perception in "*Samvegā: Aesthetic Shock*," – where artistic experience is described as the shock or wonder that may be felt when the perception of a work of art becomes a serious experience:

In the deepest experience that can be induced by a work of art (or other reminder) our very being is shaken...to its roots.... It involves... a self-naughting...and it is for this reason that it can be described as "dreadful," even though we could not wish to avoid it... I have myself been completely dissolved and broken up by...reading aloud Plato's *Phaedo*. That cannot have been an "aesthetic" emotion, such as could have been felt in the presence of some insignificant work of art, but represents the shock of conviction that only an intellectual art can deliver, the body-blow that is delivered by any perfect and therefore convincing statement of truth.

(Coomaraswamy 181)

Coomaraswamy can be rejected for this or that "reason" but not refuted. He is not giving us his views but what humanity down the ages, across traditions and continents till modernity took over, has been not only believing in but practising. So he puts before us, neat and crystal clear, forceful and convincing, picture of our collective heritage of art and literature. We can take it or leave it; we can't refute it. To all those who accuse traditional view of error, of prejudice, of superstition, of complicity with ideology, he has an answer, a definitive answer in principle if not in detail. He shows modernity the mirror and thus all the ugly things that we ordinarily either don't notice or assume they are there to stay.

Coomaraswamy, a priest of the Invisible in art, is able to broaden our perception with respect to works of art as a portal to transcendence. He has translated Walter Andre's essay in which occur the following lines that express the essence of magic that works of art can create:

Each and everyone reaches a point in his life when he begins to stiffen and—either stiffens in fact or must by superhuman effort recover for himself what he possessed undiminished in his childhood but was more and more taken from him in youth: so that the doors of the spiritual world may open to him, and the spirit find its way into body and soul.

(Coomaraswamy 230)

Coomaraswamy, we have attempted to argue, provides necessary keys to unlock treasures of wisdom of traditions that can guide us in an age that seems desperate for transcendence yet fails to find it or open itself to its wellsprings. He is our hope for the difficult times when

nihilism has overtaken the world with vehemence. As Roger Lipsey wrote in his introduction to *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*:

He was gathering ancient and traditional knowledge before it was too late. In opposition to the secular culture of our time, which he considered empty and profoundly misleading as to the proper goals of human life, he assembled a palace of memory in which ideas, images, and narratives rooted in pre-modern tradition were recognized, cleansed of misunderstandings, placed in logical order, linked with kindred materials, and restored as teachings for our time. This memory palace was not a museum; it was and still is for habitation, for use. He worked with a kind of desperation, not only because he was approaching his older years but because he experienced the society around him as amnesiac, willfully and grossly forgetful of the "traditional or 'normal' view" of life and art. He had long been a scholar. Now he was a teacher and prophet.

I think this prophet needs to be heard if the world is not ready to go to hell that the destruction of traditional cultures in the wake of modernity has let loose and the saving revelation of Being made accessible through art.

References:

Coomaraswamy, A. K. *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought: The Traditional View of Art*. William Wroth ed. World Wisdom, Inc., 2007. Print.

---. *Hinduism and Buddhism*. Golden Elixir Press, 2012. Print.

---. *The Essential Coomaraswamy*. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004. Print.

Coupe, Laurence. *Myth*. Routledge, 2009. Print.

Keeble, Brian. *God and Work: Aspects of Art and Tradition*. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2009. Print.

Livingston, Ray. *The Traditional Theory of Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962. Print.

Schuon, F. *To Have a Centre*. Microtheos.

Schuon, F. *Art from the Sacred to the Profane: East and West*. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2009. Print.

Dr. Paromita Chakrabarti

"The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read."

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (*Can the Subaltern Speak?* 1994, pp 104)

"He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain."

Walter Benjamin

"India is a mother-by-hire."

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (*Breast Stories*, 1997, pp 77)

Benedict Anderson in his groundbreaking book *Imagined Communities* (1982), describes how nations are made on the basis of the idea that people have certain things in common and come together to uphold, promote and propagate these commonalities as privileged sources of nationalism. Nationalism, according to him, is fiercely restrictive and imitative. It builds its viability on the back of myths, legends, epics and history; stressing on its antique quality and producing stories of fantastic origin. Nations are thus imagined and produced out of narratives that gradually acquire sanctity and a quality of inviolability, becoming sacrosanct, original and authentic.

Epics play an absolutely significant role in producing Indian nationalism. Along with the *Puranas*, the two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are seen as representative cultural texts of the nation, binding the Indian state into a cohesive socio-political unit with homogenous body of members. They embody the idea of the sacred nation and represent the ethos of national consciousness. Functioning as cultural markers of the nation and mobilized as fundamental to the ways in which the nation organizes its social, political and cultural life, the epics become mediations on a mythic golden age that was lost with the advent of foreign invaders in medieval times and subsequently with colonialism. With independence from the empire, the nation restored its former glory but became steeped in skepticism as a consequence of modernity. The epics needed to be repeatedly narrated, their sacrality emphasized and their vedic origins upheld as repositories of universal truth and wisdom so that their cultural credentials could be firmly established. Building national consciousness around the revivalist essentialist narratives of the past, modern India constructed notions of sacred that were brahminical, Vedic and most definitely Aryanised Hindu.

Mahashweta Devi in her short stories *Draupadi* (1988) and *Breast-Giver* (1987) uses the site of the transgressive female body to represent her radical aesthetics. The female body becomes a text that is re-written through resistance as notions of the sacred are subverted through Devi's revisionist textual politics. The epic sacrality of the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata Purana* are deflated to incorporate their secular ethics and punctuate national consciousness. Devi uses incidents and characters from the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, re-writes them in the revisionist mode to tell their stories in the context of contemporary politics. Her activist stance disrupts the universalizing tendency of the narratives and radically reconfigures the idea of the brahminical sacred. The characters in her stories challenge the limits of these sacred texts, and violently expose the fissures and fault lines of the imagined community.

Draupadi is the eponymous story of the tribal revolutionary who was given the name at birth, Draupadi Mehen by the landlord's Surja Sahu's wife. In the classic subversive mode, Mahashweta Devi turns the epic heroine into a tribal woman whose name can't be pronounced without dropping the sanskritized form and whose body is deemed untouchable within the historically sanctioned structure of a caste system. Set in the tumultuous period of 1970's, Dopdi is a tribal dalit from the remote village of Cherakhan, Bankraharj a division in the Bankura/Birbhum belt of West Bengal. On the run from the police for the murder of Surja Sahu and his son and occupying upper-caste wells and tubewells during the drought and instigating an armed and violent rebellion against the landowners, Dopdi and her husband Dulna hide in the Jharkarni forest and assist the naxalites in their guerilla mission. The couple is hunted by "Senanayak the elderly Bengali specialist in combat and extreme- Left politics" (Devi 21) with an anthropological fetish; the man who has been assigned the task of interpreting the tribal rebellion for the state and helping them quell it. Dulna is hunted down and shot to death by the police force and Dopdi remains at large, aiding and abetting Arijit, one of "the gentlemen revolutionaries" (Spivak 387), the Calcutta leader of the movement, to hide and plot a rebellion to overthrow the state administration and seize power on behalf of the peasant and landless tribals. After a long search Dopdi is "apprehended" – a word that appears in the Bengali as well as the translated English version. She is brought to Senanayak who commands his men to "make her" and "do the needful" (Devi 35). After a night of repeated rape and brutal sexual torture by the men in uniform, Dopdi is ordered to prepare herself for the morning meeting with the commander. In a superbly crafted scene of subversion, Dopdi refuses to clean herself up and wash away the night's brutality. She defies the dictates of the men and tears the cloth that has been thrown at her. Instead, she displays her injured body through her nakedness and uses it as a weapon to shame her violators.

Draupadi, the epic heroine, in the famous episode of the *Mahabharata* is dragged by her hair to the court by Dushashan, one of the Kaurava brothers after she has been lost as a stake in a game of dice by her five Pandava husbands. As Dushashana pulls at Draupadi's sari in an effort to disrobe her in the Kaurava court, she fervently prays to Lord Krishna to save her from public humiliation and miraculously the sari becomes never ending. Draupadi

is infinitely clothed and cannot be publicly disrobed. Her honour is protected and her dignity uncompromised. Interestingly, Draupadi's status as a polyandrous wife of five husbands makes her "singular" i.e. "odd, unpaired or uncoupled." (Spivak 387). Her status as a wife is suspect simply because she is shared and can be compared to a harlot; the paternity of any child out of this pluralized arrangement is also impossible to ascertain and can be questionably conflictual. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak her strange civil status makes her an easy target for humiliation: "The scriptures prescribed one husband for a woman; Draupadi is dependent on many husbands; therefore she can be designated a prostitute. There is nothing improper in bringing her clothed or unclothed into the assembly" (*Mahabharata* 65: 35-36). In spite of Draupadi's non compliance to Vedic assertions of monogamy, she is saved by divine intervention. As the chosen one of a benign Lord, Draupadi's modesty is intact and subsequently her revenge on the Kaurava's by providing the Pandava's with a just cause for a violent transaction and an honourable yet bloody battle is complete.

Mahashweta Devi rewrites this episode of *Mahabharata* in the story and shows how tribal Dopdi is brought to an army/police barrack and gang raped. Her violation takes place in a public space and it is not at all difficult for the police to strip her and "make her" (Devi 35). There is no divine intervention or any benign god to save her. Dopdi is assaulted multiple times in the course of one night and her punishment by law enforcers for transgression is complete. Conscious of the acute pain in her body, Dopdi finds that she is still able to comprehend the extent of her violation and understand that there is no one who can rescue her. Refusing to feel shame, Dopdi walks out of the tent towards Senanayak, naked. In a conclusive scene the brutally raped Draupadi challenges the state representative, Senanayak and asks him to witness the violence he has sanctioned but does not want to see: "You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me?" "Shaking with an indomitable laughter," Draupadi advances menacingly with her black body; "wiping the blood on her palm," and in a "voice that is as terrifying, sky splitting" she cries out: "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?"

She looks around and chooses the front of Senanayak's white bush shirt to spit a bloody gob at and says, "There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on; counter me - come on, counter - ?" Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid. (Devi 37)

Mahashweta Devi chooses this image of a fierce Draupadi whose resemblance to the goddess Kali is far more striking than to the classical epic heroine whose name she shares. Like Kali, Devi's Draupadi is the figure of the terrifying feminine: dark, bloodstained and disheveled, she is the rupture that destabilizes notions of sacred and profane, victim and violator, state and insurgents. Her image as a Kali-figure suggests an alternate model of self-construction and a radical departure from the essentialized notions of the feminine. By

spitting her blood on the shirt of Senanayak, Devi's Draupadi strikes at the very core of bureaucratic authority and state power. Refusing to be scripted into the helpless, "obedient, shame-ridden femininity" (Misri 607) and parading her own naked body, Draupadi becomes "an agent through a dramatic re-articulation of her identity" (Karunanayake 10). As Deepti Misri in her article "Are you a man?" points out, the moment of naked protest is radically subversive, particularly:

... in light of the long-standing and commonplace practice in India of stripping and parading of Dalit and adivasi women. Naked parades of Dalit women are a stock form of humiliation used against Dalits to 'show them their place.' Draupadi's parading of her own naked body necessarily recalls and inverts this infamous mode of caste violence. (607)

By becoming radically incomprehensible, Draupadi defies every code of knowability. She does not behave like a victim and disables Senanayak's expertise on tribals and "his anthropological will to know" by writing her own script in a language that he cannot "measure, catalog, document, render legible" or comprehend (Misri 607). Although her body is bruised and wounded, matted with dry blood, Draupadi unyokes the idea of violation from victimhood. She becomes her own testimony and is able to voice her own violation, bringing to light her custodial rape by representatives of the state. In refusing to wear her cloth she becomes a rebel subject and by refusing shame, she rejects the patriarchal expectations on her sexuality and her body. By fusing both acts of resistance into one she becomes the subaltern woman who can not only speak about institutional brutality but also hold the postcolonial state accountable for the violence it practices on its citizens.

Breast-Giver is the story of Jashoda, an impoverished Bengali Brahmin wet nurse to the wealthy Haldar family. Devi keeps Jashoda's name unchanged from the Sanskrit form to emphasize her caste identity. Yashoda is the foster mother of Lord Krishna, "a famous erotic god; in his role as strategist and advisor, it is he who saves Draupadi from dishonor." (Spivak ix) Although Jashoda is a Brahmin, her caste position ironically does not provide her immunity from poverty and class exploitation. In this story, Mahashweta Devi brings to fore questions of the woman as commodity, as body and as worker. In 1960's Bengal, Jashoda the female protagonist of Devi's story earns her livelihood by taking up professional motherhood when her husband loses his feet, and subsequently his ability to provide for the family, in a motorbike accident. With breasts that were always flowing, she not only nurses twenty of her own but also becomes instituted as mother by hire to the thirty Haldar babies who need suckling. Devi's Jashoda is an ironic symbol of mother India whose cultural valence as the honourable maternal is derived from the sacred-mythical figure of Yashoda, the mother who reared the Holy Child.

Critiquing the notion of the woman as a reproducer and the mother as the bearer/nurturer of cultural nationalism, Devi deflates essentialized notions of the ideal woman and the ideal mother through the figure of Jashoda who nurses healthy offsprings for twenty five years only to be exhausted of her bountiful resource and left destitute. Her breasts are recognized as a continuous source of nourishment and used by the wealthy landed class as

commodity. Jashoda is recognized in the patriarchal social order only because of her maternal plenitude and through her usefulness to the society as provider and nurturer. However, the repeated use of her body as food finally leaves her with breast cancer. Jashoda's martyrdom at the altar of nation and patriarchy can be read as a critique of gender oppression and class exploitation.

Jashoda stands for the nationalist imaginings of ideal mother who sacrifices her life for the nourishment and continuity of the male line/nation. She is given the status of a wet nurse only because she is a Bramhin yet her death by cancer is brought on through the relentless commercial transactions of her body as commodity. At one point the Halder mistress is convinced that:

If Jashoda becomes the infants' suckling-mother, her daily meals, clothes on feast days and some monthly pay will be enough. The mistress is constantly occupied with women's rituals. There Jashoda can act as the fruitful Bramhin wife. (Devi 50)

She instructs Kangali, Yashoda's husband to ensure that he does his duty as a husband so that the supply of milk is steady and ceaseless and Yashoda like the mythic mother of Krishna officially becomes the Mother of the World: "The Mistress's sons became incarnate Bramha and create progeny. Jashoda preserves the progeny" (51). With her constant pregnancies, her ever flowing reserves and cow-like ability to give milk without a thought to other's children turn her into a mother-figure, holy and revered. As her body fails and the milk dries up, Jashoda is turned out of the Halder house and rejected by her husband. From Milk-Mother Goddess she becomes a wounded, broken, homeless, dying destitute.

Devi's *Breast-Giver* is a radical text that fiercely critiques the very concept of motherhood and its exploitative potential that turns women like Jashoda into eternal mothers, heavy with a child suckling, always. In her story, Jashoda "does not remember at all when there was no child in her womb ... Motherhood was always her way of living and keeping alive her world of countless beings" (38). Mahashweta Devi writes the narrative of exploitation of the mother's body in all its material connotations, overturning the narrative of sacred motherhood as manifested in the cultural imaginings of the nation. The story of the mythic mother Yashoda who is upheld and revered for her nurturing and fostering of Lord Krishna is rendered hollow in the light of Jashoda's plight. Devoid of the sentimentality that is accorded to the stories of Yashoda and Krishna, Devi's Jashoda is sexualized and objectified as a woman who suckles the Halder sons to preserve their family line and keep the Halder wives in shape. The sanctity of the institution of motherhood is thus deflated by exposing it as a profession, useful only as long as there is potential for exchange and exploitation.

As Jashoda lies in the hospital waiting for death she hallucinates that there are people around her and she is not to die alone:

Who is looking? Are these her own people? The people whom she suckled because she carried them, or those she suckled for a living? Jashoda thought, after all, she had suckled the world, could she then die alone? The doctor who sees her every day, the person who will cover her face with a sheet, will put her on a cart, will lower her at the burning ghat, the untouchable who will put her in the furnace, are all her milk-sons. One must become Jashoda if one suckles the world. One has to die friendless, with no one left to put a bit of water in the mouth. Yet someone was supposed to be there at the end. Who was it? (73)

Jashoda dies alone with a cracked up bosom and with none of her milk-sons (the ones she carried and the ones she suckled) around her. With Jashoda's death from breast cancer, the readers are forced to confront the hard fact about subaltern gendered exploitation. Jashoda's ulcerating, pus-filled, red breasts are a testimony to the continuous propaganda of mythic and sacred motherhood which leaves the body exhausted, used and abused. Devi's stringent critique of the nation and its demands on poor, neglected and marginalized women to be providers and nurturers gathers its force from the cultural materialist project that she sets up. Her story of Jashoda reminds us of the exploitative nature of the postcolonial nation-state that treats the subaltern woman as object and uses her body as a resource to replenish, nurture and foster the ever growing demands of its elite and powerful subjects.

This paper thus argues that in both the stories, the mythological figures of Draupadi and Yashoda from the ancient Hindu epic of *Mahabharata* and Yashoda from *Bhagavata Purana* are appropriated to serve the cause of subaltern protest against state violence, bramhinal social order, patriarchal oppression and the relentless exploitation of bonded labour. In a compelling revisionist strategy, Devi's literary appropriation of the figure of Draupadi, the polyandrous wife of the Pandavas as Droupdi, becomes a symbol of the stringent critique of the Indian state in the 1970's and a mark of subaltern female agency. The figure of Yashoda as Jashoda also punctuates the grand narrative of motherhood and maternal nourishment that Lord Krishna received from his foster mother and allegorizes the oppressive legacies of patriarchal demands on the female body as commodity. By rewriting the figure of the sacred wife and sacred mother, Devi problematizes the image of the Indian state as a secular, democratic and progressive republic and brings to the fore questions of exclusion, exploitation and erasure of the subaltern female that such a state regularly practices. The subaltern females in her stories are not simply victims of upper caste derision and upper class hegemony, but like Droupdi they also have the ability to radically challenge these structures of oppression and resist discrimination and violence.

References:

Devi, Mahashweta. *Breast Stories*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Seagull Books: Calcutta, 1997. Print.

- Karunanayake, Dinithi. "Dis/nantling Theory? Agency and the Subaltern Woman in Mahashweta Devi's *Draupadi*." 2008, pp.1-12. Print.
- Misri, Deepti. "Are you a man?: Performing Naked Protest in India." *Signs*, Vol.36, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 603-625. Print.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Draupadi by Mahashweta Dewi." *Critical Inquiry* Vol.8, No. 2 Writing and Sexual Difference (Winter 1981), pp. 381-402. Print.

'Sacred Freedoms' in Contemporary American Fables: An Examination of the Conditions for the Revival of the Great American Novel

Saikat Ghosh

"A national literature emerges when a community whose collective existence is called to question tries to put together the reasons for its existence."

Eduard Glissant

Introduction

Ever since Henry James coined the phrase the "Great American Novel" in 1880, there has been a restless urge, on the part of literary historians and critics, to identify a set of novels that could incontestably be said to deserve the appellation. In the course of this enterprise, the Great American Novel has been variously defined as an epic, a fable, or even a template that encompasses the discursive energies of the American Dream. To the extent that the dream itself is a structure of myths through which a range of important but questionable ideas about personal liberty, racial and cultural plurality, and material aspirations cutting across classes become definitive of national life and ethos, the Great American Novel is expected to take on the suspicious function of a brochure or an advertisement. Hence, a derisive attitude against such an aesthetic endeavour has understandably come to stay since the counter-cultural decades when one of its spokesmen, Tom Wolfe had sarcastically observed: "No novelist will be remembered as *the* novelist who captured the Sixties in America a la Balzac or Thackeray because most serious American novelists would rather cut their wrists than be known as the 'Secretary of American society'" (1972). Despite its economic and military progress, America's image became culturally indefensible to the world in the Sixties – as an imperial nation-state characterized by unbounded greed for global markets, supremacist foreign policy, corrupt trade practices, techno-consumerism and glaringly obvious racism. The postmodern turn in American fiction has resulted in a relentless questioning of the idea of a unified America. Hyphenated identities and solipsistic, even pathological, points of view narrated the America of social alienation, cults, secret societies, encrypted codes and mutant lifestyles wherein 'ideology' and 'consciousness' became sites of deconstruction. The strange equilibrium offered by the 'end of ideology' in American politics mirrored the writer's flight away from attempting the Great American Novel. The great text of America seemed to have dissolved into a permanent state of entropy. It is hence an appealing irony wherein the last few years, accompanying the slow and prolonged meltdown of the prosperity-bubble, marking the passage from the Bush-era culminating in the 9/11 attacks to the Occupy Wall Street movement, have also witnessed a revival of the Great American Novel, especially as an ideologically expressive medium, though not identically in the terms that the nineteenth century saw it. The conditions for this revival offer a set of crucial observations about the relationship of literature to society, and how literature keeps re-encoding the value of the sacred in the cultural life of the nation.

Prehistory

Unlike their British counterparts, the American novels of the nineteenth century were marked by the urge to symbolically represent the tenor of life and society. Many of them, notably Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1885), vocalized the nation's destiny in identifiably metaphysical registers as the realities were too starkly deviant and unsettled to offer any definition. The philosophical and political texts of the founding fathers defined the new nation against the grain of its realities. Yet, Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the works of the Transcendentalists that suggested the path of distanced wonder leading to a spiritual embracement of the new world, offered hope and a shared sense of meaning. These texts were too sacred to be kept aside while the quest for a suitable economy of representation was on. Thus, Tony Tanner (1965) notes that the Great Novel of America:

[H]as often shown an inability to move beyond one particular syndrome of responses – wonder keeling over into horror, delight switching into disillusion, revulsion locked with awe. It has shown itself...too suspicious of the analytical intellect, too disinclined to develop a complex reaction to society, too much given to extreme reactions, too hungry for metaphysics. In style, it has, at times been too sedulous in its indiscriminate attention to details, or too apt to avoid complexity by leaping to the refuge of vague generalizations.

(349)

The simultaneous urge to capture detail and to subjugate the potential for critical reflection to wonderment may account for Leslie Fiedler's remark that the American novels that have continued to enjoy long shelf-lives are essentially stories of boyhood adventure (1966). The analogy sits well on the surface as the pre-adolescent experience of life is characterized by a vividness that is (to borrow from Sartre's comment on Absurdism) "transparent to things but opaque to meanings." Yet, this repression finds its chthonic echo in the Gothic, the novel of terror. Fiedler thus characterizes the American Novel as a compulsive mode of re-inscribing the Gothic narrative at the heart of the American experience. He explains the paradoxical production of the American dream (in essence, a nightmare) thus:

The American writer inhabits a country at once the dream of Europe and a fact of history; he lives on the last horizon of an endlessly retreating vision of innocence on the 'frontier', which is to say, the margin where the theory of original goodness and the fact of original sin come face to face. To express this 'blackness, ten times black' and to live by it in a society in which, since the decline of orthodox Puritanism, optimism has become the chief affective religion, is a complex and difficult task. (26-27)

Wonderment also proved to be difficult to sustain as the great white hope of capitalism in post-bellum America, initially seen as a leveler holding the promise of democracy and liberal choice, crashed with the Economic Depression of the Twenties. The revulsion directed at Jay Gatsby by the citizens of West Egg as they discover that he is a bootlegger, in Scott-Fitzgerald's elegiac tribute to the Great American Novel serves as an interesting transfiguration of the hatred encountered by the Monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Just as the promise of Romantic self-renewal is exploded in *Frankenstein* to give way to the horror of uncomprehending desire, *The Great Gatsby* (1925) leads us step by step to the recognition of the meaningless latitude through which the exhausted human spirit is forced to encounter the sublime material vastness of the abyss:

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island that had flowered once for the Dutch sailor's eyes – a fresh, green beast of the new world...for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate with his capacity for wonder. (144)

The Depression years seemed to justify the natural death of the sacred reign of wonder and American literature began to traverse interesting formal and thematic trajectories that integrated it with European experiments in Modernism. Yet, in rescinding its hitherto close pact with the American dream, the American novel was estranged from the mainstream cultural space in which all-American attitudes continued to be defined. Instead, it became a staple in the margins from where American novelists could no longer relate to the nation's social predicament without courting the displeasure of the political establishment. The McCarthy years completed the isolation of the socially-impotent American novelist who became increasingly esoteric in his approach to writing. The popular appeal of the American novel underwent terminal decline as the advertising industry and Hollywood entirely took over the job of improvising and thematically terraforming the country into being. Popular romances from the baby-boomers era, the talismanic superheroes of Marvel and DC Comics, the modular glamour of magazines that invested sports and commodities of domestic comfort with increments from the American dream without offering the shaping passions of the dream itself – all these constituted the new mainstream of American culture in the optimistic new post-War years of Fordist social corporatism. In tandem with the Great American Novel, the great foundational texts of America came to be confined to library shelves even as the ground for future social and cultural eruptions was being prepared over the invisible faultlines of American society.

Dialectic of the American Logocracy

"In the beginning of America was not only the word but the contradiction of the Word."

In granting the "unalienable Rights...to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" the American Constitution set the basis for a cohesive and durable American future. The fact that, as iconic Rock musician Bruce Springsteen pointed to in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, this future always seems to be "just within grasp yet forever out of reach" has a great deal to do with the tensions experienced through the "contradictory imperatives of Constitutional and Revolutionary thought" (Gustafson: 1992) that went into the writing of the *Declaration*. The Declaration prefaced the American Revolution but looked forward to a society that would, in its ceaseless quest for stability, have no place for the nurture of revolutionary tendencies. The Revolution would remain permanently inscribed in the passionate appeal of the Constitution but could have no authentic resonance in the lives and conduct of the American people. It is in precisely this sense that Thomas Gustafson describes the American state as a "logocracy" inclined to settle or fix meanings in the interests of order and community, but also engaged with the subconscious desire to unsettle meanings and question everything sacred by undermining meaning. The American dream can hence sustain as a permanently deferred vision of liberty, even in parodies and reductive notions of freedom. The repression of the revolutionary imperative has, on the one hand, fixed the dream as something that carries the meaning of permanently settling into or integrating oneself with, whereas on the other, its dark manifestation to unfix and unsettle meanings can be found in the centrepetal rhetoric of the post-Fordist State to wage permanent war against its own people through fiscal cuts and monetary conjurations, as much as against dissident nations, communities and groups through military offensives.

The legitimacy enjoyed by such a mendacious state rests on its ability to affect a willed disappearance of historical truth in the self-attenuating discourse of Republicanism. Hannah Arendt has paid close attention to this process in her essay *On Revolution* (1963) wherein she diagnoses the malady of the American logocracy as an anxious attempt to tame the revolutionary origins of the nation by instituting Republican values as the sacred legacy of a continuous past. She describes this anxiety as stemming from the collective "failure to remember that a revolution gave birth to the United States and that the republic was brought into existence by no 'historical necessity' and no organic development, but by a deliberate act: the foundation of freedom. Failure to remember this is largely responsible for the intense fear of revolution." (216)

Several truth claims have been made on behalf of history by the American political establishment in recent years. These have ranged from the "clash of civilizations" to "God's end-time" as the Will to Truth has become increasingly tenuous. The official spin doctors of the establishment have resorted to continuous word-play and subversion of meanings hitherto regarded sacred; policy makers and philosophers alike have, in parallel, questioned the currency of truth, especially historical truth. Spurious business models and ideas that constitute the basis for an aggressive macroeconomic philosophy, albeit not confirming with people's collective experiences, have been celebrated as self-evidently rational. This fetishism of Reason is not new in American history, and the arrogant global sway of the American establishment in the Nineties provided the novelist the opportunity to turn to

history. In 1996-7, a clutch of new novels appeared on the scene, provoking an enormous amount of critical attention and debate. David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996), Don De Lillo's *Underworld* (1997), Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* (1997) and Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* (1997) displayed diverse stylistic investments and aesthetic visions but converged thematically as novels about American history and the politics of remembering. *Mason & Dixon* created a stir as an historical novel, marking a radical stylistic departure from the earlier novels of Pynchon; it attained immense popularity as a sprawling narrative about the founding of America, written in the Eighteenth Century idiom. Yet, readers immediately recognized the close call it had with the state of the nation in 1997. In framing the argument for the novelistic return to historical themes and processes, Pynchon wrote:

Who claims Truth, Truth abandons. History is hir'd, or coero'd, only in the interests that must ever prove base. She is too innocent to be left within the reach of anyone in Power...[S]he needs to be tended lovingly and honourably by fabulists and counterfeiters, Ballad-Mongers and Cranks of ev'ry Radius, Masters of Disguise to provide her the Costume, Toilette, and Bearing, and Speech nimble enough to keep her beyond the Desires, or even the Curiosity, of Government. (350)

Pynchon was interested in recovering a deep Mnemonic for the people, the dream as it could have been dreamt by real people in flesh and blood, and not merely the concept or shell of a dream that becomes the textual repository for every semantic manipulation. In turning once more to the American Dream, the novel does not imbue history with sentimentality. Rather, it recognizes the Will to Truth in the cracks of history through which the colonial impulse recasts itself as the impulse to liberate. The contradictions of the Dream are registered in the stargazer Mason's awareness even as he undertakes, with his young and eager associate Dixon, to draw the historic line that will separate the free North from the slave-owning South. On the eve of the Revolution, he tells Dixon: "This Age sees a corruption and disabling of the ancient Magick. Projectors, Brokers of Capital, Insurancers, Peddlars upon a global scale, Enterprisers and Quacks – these are the last poor fallen and feckless inheritors of a Knowledge they can never use, but in the service of Greed. The coming Rebellion is their's – Franklin and that lot – and Heaven help the rest of us, if they prevail."

(487-88)

'The Indigenous American Berserk'

Pynchon's English scientist-duo embark on a dark passage across the Atlantic to lead a commissioned survey of the lay of the American territory but they end up anatomizing the "strange mix of philosophical rationalism, spiritual yearning and economic rapacity in the American salmagundi" (Coward, 2012). As the Revolution culminates in the founding of a new Republic, and the political fathers Benjamin Franklin and George Washington (depicted as self-serving eccentrics) settle for new but staid course of expansion, the passions that made

the Revolution possible are transformed into "one more hope in the realm of the subjunctive." (Pynchon 543).

The spirituality of the American Revolution resides in the collective political unconscious but manifests itself from time to time whenever belief in the Dream is disrupted. The Civil Rights Movement and the revolt of the youth in the Sixties may be said to mark such a disruption. This disruption manifested itself in what novelist Philip Roth has described as the "indigenous American berserk" in his Pulitzer-winning novel *American Pastoral*. This novel marks a decisive shift away from a sacred investment in the American Dream to a more reflective and critical mood pervading the life of an affluent Jewish-American community. The novel traces the history of the Levovs, a Newark based Jewish family that has built its reputation and seemingly stable belief in the Dream through two generations of enterprise in the local leather industry. The family's fortunes have grown in tandem with the overseas expansion of the leather industry; yet this prosperity is set against the gradual shifting of the leather industry away from Newark and the concomitant decline of the city itself. The subject of the story, Seymour 'Swede' Levov, is the second generation entrepreneur who has inherited his father's glove-making business. He is a well-adjusted and adorable all-American boy who, the narrator suspects, has nothing of his own, "not even a substratum" of existence (38). He embodies the ideal hard-working, insular and family-oriented values of the post-War American citizenry, never resisting his father's urge to take crucial decisions on his behalf.

The father "Mr. Levov was one of those slum-reared Jewish fathers whose rough-hewn, undereducated perspective goaded a whole generation of striving, college-educated Jewish sons; a father for whom everything is an unshakeable duty, for whom there is a right way and a wrong way and nothing in between, a father whose compound of ambitions, biases and beliefs is so unruffled by careful thinking that he isn't as easy to escape from as he seems. Limited men with limitless energy; men quick to be friendly and quick to be fed up; men for whom the most serious thing in life is to *keep going despite everything*. And we were their sons. It was our job to love them" (11) (italics in original). At the father's insistence Swede Levov renounces potential stardom in sports to successfully take up the family-business and expand to Puerto Rico. His own version of living the Dream leads him to wed a Miss New Jersey trophy wife and move to a pastoral haven in the gentile suburbs of Old Rimrock. His inner life is simple though: in his spare time he imagines himself to be Johnny Appleseed, a mythical character from boyhood stories, a beefy simpleton walker in the image of a Transcendentalist sage "with a big stride and a bag of seeds and a huge spontaneous affection for the landscape, and everywhere he went he scattered the seeds" (316). Swede Levov's wish to see his uncomplicated and happy life through is however shattered as his only child Merry grows up to be resentful of her parents and retaliates against their smugness by joining the extremist anti-Vietnam war protesters. His wife, Dawn initially attributes the daughter's rebellion to psychological insecurities (despite her intelligence, Merry's speech-defect is met with general disapproval and pity) but eventually gives up trying to goad her into submission. Merry precipitates the crisis in their lives by bombing a local post-office and killing a neighbor. As she turns fugitive from law, Swede and Dawn are forced to directly

confront the political situation and reflect on hitherto alien issues like war, American exceptionalism and terrorism.

The turning point for Swede comes when he discovers that Merry has turned towards a self-annihilating form of spirituality in order to repent, while during the course of dealing with the crisis, his marriage has become irretrievable. He learns that, as compensation, Dawn has been having an affair with his associate Mr. Orkutt, for whom she undergoes an expensive and risky cosmetic surgery that will renew her physical glamour. The obsessive search for his estranged daughter leads Swede Levov into the heart of the chaos that, as he is eventually made to realize, had already imperceptibly contaminated every aspect of social and national life. In the denouement of the novel, his belief in the Dream implodes while people around him dissect the popularity of the pornographic film *Deep Throat* (even as Nixon's Watergate scandal begins to break news on television sets) during the course of a seemingly innocuous dinner-party. As each character assembled at the party lets out the inner demons while squabbling with the other, Levov ruminates thus: "Boiling away beneath *Deep Throat* was the far more disgusting and transgressive subject...of wantonness and betrayal and deception, of treachery and disunity among neighbors and friends, the subject of cruelty. The mockery of human integrity, every ethical obligation destroyed - that was the subject here tonight" (380). The indigenous American berserk is the flip-side of the American Dream, a native offspring of the sanitized pursuit of happiness and refusal to engage with history. The fallibility of inherited ideas and the precarious tenor of American life come through to him in this moment of *Anagnorisis*. The novel ends by underlining the principal contradiction of American life as Swede Levov puts it: "And what is wrong with their life? What on earth is less reprehensible than the life of the Levovs?" (423)

The Heart of a Heartless World: Re-envisioning the Great American Novel

Revival of the Great American Novel at a time when the American Dream is possibly the most resisted grand narrative of Western culture is baffling – baffling enough to merit a close examination of the compass of such a paradox. Lawrence Buell has lately attempted such an examination and his clear appeal on the matter has to be regarded as a significant intervention in the re-writing of the nation's cultural history. In the Introduction to his monumental study, *The Dream of the Great American Novel* (2014), he has written:

Great American Novels are not expected to be rituals of self-congratulation like July 4 celebrations or Hollywood melodramas – although several of the prime candidates have been retrofitted to the latter. On the contrary, the historical record suggests that serious contenders are likely to insist that national greatness is unproven, that its pretensions are hollow, and that the ship of State is going down. This paradox in itself is reason enough to take the subject of Great American Novelism seriously. (18)

The shift in perception from regarding the Great American Novel as a fiction of innocence to a representation of experience is evident in the manner that Buell states his case.

Yet, it is not merely that; he also invites the reader to revise his previously held opinion about the purpose of the form and its relationship with the American Dream. "Historical record" becomes the basis of this revision wherein the Nineteenth Century canon, hitherto accorded a simple romantic purpose by a line of critics from Matthiessen, Trilling, R. W. B. Lewis to Harry Levin of instilling in their readers a naïve fascination with the spread and wealth of the land, the heroic cult of the individual taming the wilds, the pious life of families and paternalism of the community, could now be seen as signifying a broader matrix of historical experience which allows readers to critically question the dominant ideologies. To understand the importance of this revision, one must recall A. N. Kaul's classic defense of the American romance (*American Vision*; 1963) in which he demonstrated that the structure of the romance did not impede the critical imagination of novelists like Hawthorne, Melville, Cooper and Mark Twain. Their idealism notwithstanding, these writers wrote and critiqued the dominant imperatives and impulses that produced the actual society and hence, the gap that existed between the promises and the reality. As for the lack of realism, Kaul suggested that the American novel could not be expected to follow the lines of development evident in the history of the European novel, as America lacked a sense of continuous history (the historical consciousness being implicitly central to realism). Kaul did additionally forward his concurrence with sociologist Karl Mannheim in stating that the definition of social realism need not be an absolute one and may vary in terms of cultural and political contexts, but he stopped short of arguing that the canon of the American Novel could indeed be seen as a hybrid variety of realism. To read Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* (2001), a novel which has been generally described as the first great work of social realism in America, is to also understand why and how the Nineteenth Century American novelists failed to generate realist critiques of American ideology.

The Corrections was published in the same year as Americans across the side streets of Lower Manhattan and across millions of television-sets watched the live unfolding of the 9/11 drama. The state-of-the-nation novel does not participate in the mendacious cook-up of national paranoia projecting its deep-seated fears on to fundamentalist Islam and Al-Qaeda. Instead, it looks forward to the economic meltdown as it bears witness to the souring of a mid-Western family's dream of reuniting against odds:

The correction, when it finally came, was not an overnight bursting of the bubble but a much more gentle letdown, a year-long leakage of value from key financial markets, a contraction too gradual to generate headlines and too predictable to hurt anybody but fools and the working poor. (647)

The turn of events related to 9/11 in the United States is neither passively consumed as a spectacle nor is a matter of wondrous speculation; Franzen tries to read the symptoms of a deeper and more gradual historical transformation of the American destiny. With a compelling irony, one may note that the same financial districts of New York were to become, a decade on, the sites of some of the most powerful citizens' protests against corporate greed.

The drama revolving around the provincial family life of the Lamberts of St. Jude, their aspirations and crises that stem from a simple-minded belief in the Dream which is obviously incommensurate with reality - provide the microcosm of the national narrative. The ageing and Parkinsons-afflicted patriarch Alfred has retired from an unremarkable career on the railroad to which he looks back with broken-hearted nostalgia. He is intermittently critical of the new businesses as this 'heartline' of America becomes the casualty in aggressive takeover bids and sees mass retrenchment of skilled workers on a regular basis. On the whole, Alfred suffers a slow and debilitating slide into unconsciousness, a slide that is mirrored by the shifting of his precious household items into the basement, for want of space:

And so in the house of the Lamberts, as in St. Jude, as in the country as a whole, life came to be lived underground. (12)

On the one hand, his eldest son Gary (a banker) amorally looks forward to trading Alfred's illness with a hold on the stocks of the Axon Corporation which wants Alfred to serve as a guinea-pig for the final-phase experiments of its neuro-chemical treatment product, Eberle. On the balance, his youngest and most thoughtful child Chip, an unemployed young academic trying to rise from the ashes of a failed university career, suffers from harrowing self-doubt even as he thinks his way through the problems that everyone around him is forced to confront:

Criticizing a sick culture, even if the criticism accomplished nothing, had always felt like useful work. But if the supposed sickness wasn't a sickness at all - if the great Materialist Order of technology and consumer appetite and medical science really was improving lives...than there was no longer even the most abstract utility to this criticism. (51)

In a world that does not offer the individual any certitude, value or promise of salvation, people like Chip are unable to completely dissociate themselves from the propaganda that reduces every aspect of their fragmented lives into commodities. His mother Enid, and sister Denise, are equally unsure of their footing in the slippery world of greed, exclusion, libidinal excess and forced austerity. To combat this, Chip has to overcome his academic 'standoffishness' and like the other characters in the novel, lose himself in the human debris of survival stories. His access to a surer and more sharply critical language of protest comes through a painstaking series of changes or corrections whereby he replaces the individual sense of want and psychological vulnerability with social solidarity and historical insight. Franzen's novel has no scope for the individual to accomplish a revolt against the dominant impulses, but gives the society a set of redeeming political choices. In this important sense, its realism works in contrast to the tragic foreclosure of critique in the

Nineteenth Century romances, even as they allowed individuals to break away from society and create new structures of feeling. The Great American Novel of the present time is not a revival of the romantic mode; it does not set a higher innocence as its *Telos*. It is a counterintuitive mode that increasingly casts analytical light on the romance of the American Dream from the outside, and redefines its sacred credentials in accordance with the age of disbelief. In other words, it frames the critical dialectic between the sacred ideas and sacred hopes of American Revolution. It keeps the subjunctive dream alive through a narrative of collective disenchantment and disaffection from powerful ideas that have allowed a sovereign control over people's desires.

References:

- Arendt, Hannah. "The Revolutionary Tradition and its Lost Treasure." *On Revolution*. New York: Penguin, 1963. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Dream of the Great American Novel*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014. Print.
- Cowart, David. "The Luddite Vision: *Mason & Dixon*." *American Literature* 71.2 North Carolina: Duke University Press, June 1999. Print.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Criterion Press, 1960. Print.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. London: Hatchette, 1993. (Reprint). Print.
- Franzen, Jonathan. *The Corrections*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. Print.
- Gustafson, Thomas. *Representative Words: Politics, Literature and the American Language, 1776-1865*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print.
- Kaul, A. N. *The American Vision: Actual and Ideal Society in Nineteenth-century American Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963. Print.
- Pynchon, Thomas. *Mason & Dixon*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1997. Print.
- Roth, Philip. *American Pastoral*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1997. Print.
- Tanner, Tony. *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965. Print.
- Wolfe, Thomas. "Why They Aren't Writing the Great American Novel Anymore." *New York Times*, 17 September, 1972. Print.

The Militant Poet: Meena Kandasamy's Poetry of Protest

Dr. Iffat Maqbool

Women's poetry in English has made a significant intervention in the male canon of Indian English literature. Kamala Das- 'the single woman revolution' as she is often referred to, refashioned the idiom of women's poetry by her highly individualized poetic voice. Since then women's poetry has shown a remarkable trajectory, exhibiting the manifold engagements of women poets with the personal as well as public domains. Armed with a revisionary manifesto, women poets have moved on from a narrow range of subject matter to include the changing roles of today's woman, her consequent isolation from traditional mores, as well as an engagement with larger political issues. Bruce King rightly remarks:

... feminist ideology has taken its place within a broad spectrum of topics including the complications of a single life, problems of marriage and life abroad. Women have more education, more exposure and are more financially independent than ever before. Poetry in English by women is part of the modernization of Indian society including its participation in a global system of education and economics which has replaced the older colonial and imperial networks. (312)

Since the 1990's, there is a clear liberating effect on women's poetry signaling the advent of a new poetics that articulates the complexities of modern Indian life where the demands of tradition are often seen as inimical to the imaginative self. There is a consequent tussle with essentialized definitions of womanhood which provided convenient categories with which women were expected to conform. Many women poets often deconstruct mythologized, gendered versions of femininity. Stressing self-expression and self-experience, these poets speak in a simple, candid style that rejects sentimentality and versification. The result is a thoroughly modern idiom replete with irony, colloquialisms and self-mocking. Sexuality, no longer taboo, is treated with a frankness and directness and is a major theme in their poetry. Prominent voices are those of Imtiaz Dharker, Ruth Vanita, Menka Shivdasani, Tara Patel et al.

A powerful voice that has emerged in recent times is that of Meena Kandasamy (b. 1984) whose dissident voice has only reinforced the note of feminist individualism that characterizes contemporary women's poetry in India. Writing self -consciously and uninhibitedly, she foregrounds her Dalit identity as well as the oppressive power structures that maintain social hierarchies. Her "angry, militant" voice is indicative of the growing corpus of Dalit literature that has expanded enough to merit a close analysis of its evolving aesthetics. Writing, like Kamala Das, from a sense of conviction rather than convention, her poetry grows directly from her personal experience. Kandasamy acknowledges that her greatest influence on her poetry is Kamala Das, because ... it was her I-don't-give-a-damn

poetry that made me try to write poetry; because it was her success as a woman poet that gave me the courage to emulate her example; and above all, because of her flamboyant lust for life.

Her major works include *Touch* (2006), *Ms Militancy* (2010), a novel *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014). She has also co-authored a biography of Kerala's foremost Dalit revolutionary Ayyankali as well as translated many significant Tamil works into English. She speaks openly and rebelliously against Brahminical hegemonic discourses that have insidiously shaped the idea of India and offers in its place an alternative paradigm. Her poetry is anti-mainstream since it programmatically targets hegemonic/mainstream Hindu society and repeatedly goes back to Hindu and Tamil myths which she aims to debunk. In an interview she clearly states the intent of her poetry:

First, because poetry is intricately connected with language, and since language is the site of all subjugation and oppression, I think poetry alone has the power of being extremely subversive. Because, on several levels, it can challenge a language, its patterns of thought, its prejudices and its enshrined, encapsulated inequalities.

Touch, her debut poetry collection, dexterously plays upon the word "touch" since it is the touch of a non-caste hindu or untouchable that contaminates the touchable, pure upper caste hindu. Using the notion of touch as her central metaphor, Kandasamy hits at the root of caste hierarchy that keeps an entire people anonymous, faceless. Vanquished and repressed for centuries, poets like Kandasamy provide a counter aesthetic that challenges the dictates of Brahminical, mainstream culture. Critics at once noticed the honesty and vibrancy of the poems. Jaydeep Sarangi comments:

Touch encapsulates the aesthetics of pain, yes, but also a powerful aesthetics of protest. If form and structure and semantics and syntax are being mutilated, then it is because the Dalits are hitting back. It is an aesthetics of pain, and a prolonged longing; a powerful aesthetics of resistance. *Touch* by Meena Kandasamy amplifies, illustrates, and carries on this struggle for power and autonomy by women poets. Apart from her expert use of language, she has a sincerity of feeling and an honesty of experience rarely encountered. (online)

Here is Kandasamy:

You will have known almost
every knowledgeable thing about
the charms and the temptations
that touch could hold.
But, you will never have known
that touch—the taboo
to your transcendence,
when crystallized in caste
was a paraphernalia of
undeserving hate. (2006)

In fact her poetry revolves around the twin poles of hate and anger at an unjust subjugation of an entire community. She delves into the innermost recesses of the dominant ideology in order to unearth and reexamine some controlling modes of behavior. Challenging caste-borne identities, here works the story of Eklavya, the figure from the Mahabharata, who being an outcaste was denied tutorship by Dronacharya but due to sheer hard work and talent, masters the art of archery. In a bitter twist, the master asks for Eklavya's thumb as Gurudakshina in order that Arjuna, the Kshatriya prince remains unrivalled. For Kandasamy as well as other Dalit writers, Eklavya becomes a metaphor for undeserved exclusion and othering by Caste Hindus. In her typical blunt manner, she hits out at the "fascist Dronacharyas" of yesterday and today:

You can do a lot of things
With your left hand.
Besides, fascist Dronacharyas warrants
Left-handed treatment.
Also,
You don't need your right thumb,
To pull a trigger or hurl a bomb. (Kandasamy 2006)

In her foreward to this volume, Kamala Das comments:

Once again after long years of search I came into contact with the power of honest poetry when I was reading Meena Kandasamy's anthology of verse.

Dying and then resurrecting herself again and again in a country that refuses to forget the unkind myths of caste and perhaps of religion, Meena carries as her twin self, her shadow the dark cynicism of youth that must help her to survive. "Happiness is a hollow world for fools to inhabit" cries Meena at a moment of revelation. Revelations come to her frequently and prophecies linger at her lips.

Older by nearly half a century, I acknowledge the superiority of her poetic vision and wish her access to the magical brew of bliss and tears each true poet is forced to partake of, day after day, month after month, year after year. (Kandasamy 2006)

Combining a fiery activism with her candid poetic style, her writing is aimed at sending out a clear social message. Social justice inevitably becomes a dominant feature of her entire canon. In order to rectify the damage done by some of the age-old and time-honored religious and cultural (mainstream) icons, she often takes a cynical, tongue-in-cheek reappraisal of institutionalized mythology. Her poem on Gandhi called *Mohandas Karamchand* is an attempt at a de-idealization of one of the most revered nationalist icons of modern India. In a nod towards the Ambedhkar-Gandhi debate, which puts Gandhi in an ambivalent light vis-a-vis his much highlighted role towards the emancipation of the untouchables and removal of casteism from hindu society, Kandasamy attacks the father of the nation:

Bapu, Bapu, you big fraud, we hate you
That trash is long overdue

You need a thorough review,
 Your tax-free salt stimulated our wounds
 We gonna sue you, the congress shoe
 You knew, you bloody well knew,
 Caste won't go, they wouldn't let it go.
 It haunts us now, the way you do
 with a spooky stick, a eerie laugh or two.
 "You dubbed us Pariahs—Harijans"
 Goody-goody guys of a bigot god
 Ram Ram Hey Ram –Boo". (2006)

Here is the anger and hurt that stems from the mainly exclusionary politics played by India's political elite, marginalizing its minorities and subaltern groups into acquiescence towards majoritarian discourses. By speaking out, she opens up those areas which often remain suppressed to accommodate sweeping nationalistic claims of a monolithic nationhood. By satirizing Gandhi, Kandasamy dismantles some foundational nationalist myths which continue to erase India's vast, pluralistic identity. The poetry here acquires a clear note of political protest.

Her next volume *Ms Militancy* (2010), with its self-consciously aggressive title suggests the antithetical stance of the poet towards convention and dogma. (The collection is interestingly dedicated to Wendy Doniger, the American Indologist whose book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* was recently banned in India). Here is poetry of the polemic kind—powerful, hard-hitting and unapologetic. In an appropriately titled preface *Should you take offence* she takes on the entire pantheon of Hindu gods—hits out, protests and rewrites completely on her own, feminist terms. Revealing the patriarchal stronghold of Hinduism, she completely dismantles mainstream Hindu divine lineage.

You are the repressed Ram...you are Indra causing bloodshed, you are
 Brahma fucking up my fates, You are Manu robbing me of my right to live
 and learn and choose. You are sage Gautama turning your wife to stone. You
 are Adi Sankara driving me to death. You are all the men for whom I would
 never moan, never mourn. You are the conscience of this Hindu society.
 (Kandasamy 2010)

This is a powerful feminist critique of divine iconography, an attempt to locate the subjection of women in patriarchal mythology. Not only this, it is also concurrently, an attempt to trivialize and interrogate tyrannical upper caste biases towards the Dalit community. The muted community is often supplied a dominant ideology, here brahminical/Sanskritized Hinduism, by which to feel eternally inferior. Dalit writing therefore becomes an urgent backlash against hegemonical social hierarchies.

Patriarchy has always found a powerful ally in mythology to define as well as perpetuate gendered roles for women. Feminists often revisit mythological notions of womanhood and render them in irreverent, antithetical versions. The desire is to break free of restrictive, over-

idealised, or over-vilified categories since mythology often results in stereotyping, paying scant attention to individuality.

My language is dark and dangerous and desperate in its eagerness to slaughter your myths. My lines are feverish with the heat of the bodies you banish in your *Manusmriti* and *Kamasutra*. Tamil woman that I am, I do not spare the ageist, classist, sexist Tholkappiyam either.

(Kandasamy 2010)

Meena Kandasamy's states emphatically that she wants to "struggle with any story that has stayed the same way for far too long". So her Mahabharata will move to Las Vegas, her Ramayana will be retold in three different ways, she warns the patriarchal/conventional reader:

My Kali kills. My Draupadi strips. My Sita climbs onto a stranger's lap .All
 my women militate. They brave bombs, they belittle kings. They take on the
 sun. They take after me.

(Kandasamy 2010)

Here is Kandasamy's Sita:

Scorned, she sought refuge in spirituality
 And was carried away by a new-age guru
 Years later, her husband won her back,
 But by then she was adept at walkouts
 She had perfected the vanishing act. (2010)

In this anthology, poems relating to the themes of love, personal relationships, and broken dreams are uncannily reminiscent of the best of Kamala Das' poetry. In the opening poem, *A Cunning Stunt*, Kandasamy paints a brutalized picture of lovemaking, revealing the dominance/control of the male over the female body, who can only call it names, fix it, alternating between the womb, the uterus, then abode, family, race, stock home. Female subjection either through sexuality, modes of reproduction or patriarchal conditioning make the woman only a receptacle for the man and then the race. This poem has a clear intertextual connection with at least two of Kamala Das' poems, *An Introduction* and *The Freaks*. In a conclusion that is almost a reframing of the "flamboyant lust" of *The Freaks*, Kandasamy says *I turn frigid, I turn faker* (2010).

Other love poems like *Jouissance*, *Mrs Sunshine*, *Screwtiny* are clearly indebted to Kamala Das in their frank, unsentimental and often cynical attitude to the experience of love relationships.

The volume also contains some very powerful political poetry wherein the poet engages with other themes like her sympathy with Sri Lankan Tamils. In *Massacre of the Innocents* which is a remarkable feat of poetic compression, she aligns Indra, the Hindu god with Herod, Hitler, and the IPKF (Indian peace keeping force) in Sri Lanka. All guilty of the massacre of innocents:

Indra
 The hindu god of war
 Herod merely chopped up male kids
 Hitler only gassed jewish infants in Germany
 The peace keepers just dipped Tamil babies in boiling tar
 But Indra perfected this science of slaughter
 indra had cop,vedic boss and

Inspirational hate-monger,the genocidal god of gods (Kandasamy 2010)

This poem has clear resonances in the Dalit context wherein a supreme Hindu deity is reviewed by a subaltern voice, rendering him in grotesque, violent terms. Bereft of divinity, Indra is a hate-monger comparable to the worst of genocidal figures in human history. By doing so, Kandasamy alludes to caste-based violence perpetrated by upper caste hindus in the name of religion since caste identities sanctioned by the dominant, hindu, Sanskritized culture have only created an antagonism between people. The poet's Dalit consciousness rebels against the atrocities committed (even today) in the name of caste,and in a brilliant move ,by equating Indra with contemporary violence, makes it a compelling poem-immediate, sharp and unsparring.

Kandasamy dedicates a group of poems in this volume to women saint poets drawn from different ages, cultures and traditions namely Karaikal Ammaiyar, Andal, and Mira. Forsaking traditional roles, these women bhakts went out in search of true communion with the beloved- often a male god, here, Shiva, Perumal and Krishna. The desire is not wholly separable from the erotic but a combination of divine aspiration and earthly love. Kandasamy revisits these spiritualized figures and endows them with a humanity and sexuality which popular culture cannot. In a modernized idiom, these saint-poets come alive in all their vulnerable humanity and unbridled sensuality. In a kind of reverse gaze, Kandasamy reimagines their specific, tortured histories that poured out into their poems:

the guilt glazed love lay on Andal's breasts,
 thick and heavy as him.
 frightened with force
 and locked away, she conjured him every night,
 her empurumaan, her emperor-man,
 recklessness on speed-dial, she became
 a rape romantic. He, a bodice ripper. (2010)

Or Karaikal Anmayar who went out in search of Shiva,

i am a dead woman walking asylum corridors,
 with faltering step, with felted, flying hair,
 with hollowed cheeks that offset bulging eyes,
 with welts on my wrists, with creasing skin,
 with seizures of speech and song, with a single story
 between my sobbing pendulous breasts. (2010)

Or

Mira,
 Lying on her back-waiting

To be full, filled and fulfilled—
 Mira sings a siren-song
 To summon Krishna. (2010)

Kandasamy's stark confrontational idiom demystifies her saint-protagonists and reveals them in all their candour and humanity.

As a poet, Meena Kandasamy provides a much needed impetus to the field of women's poetry by her unflinching commitment to social issues. Never didactic or predictable, her poetry stems from her acute consciousness of her Dalit/feminine identity. By opening up newer areas, she has only democratized the space of Indian English poetry which augurs well for the development of this genre. When asked in an interview whether she would see herself as writing alternative poetry she comments:

No, I would not attach labels like parallel or alternative. Believe me, what I am writing is pretty mainstream. The so-called mainstream is something that has been hijacked by an elite minority. As a consequence, their culture, their practices, their view-points are being identified as mainstream. The real India, crumbling under its caste system and its corruption, isn't present in their writing. I could just say that voices of women and men from the oppressed castes and minorities will give credibility to the mainstream.

We hope so too.

References:

Kandasamy, Meena. *Touch*. Peacock Books, 2006. Print.

---, *Ms Militancy*. Navayana Publishing, New Delhi, 2010. Print.

mascarareview.com/jaydeep-sarangi-reviews-touch-by-meena-kandasamy/ Web.

"The Struggle to annihilate caste will be victorious": Meena Kandasamy in conversation with Ujjwal Jain. *Postcolonial Text*, Vol 4, No 4, 2008. Print.

The birth of the short fiction was no ordinary event in Kashmiri literature as it changed the contours of the language. Borrow as it did from the rich mythological, oral and cultural legacy of Kashmir, its emergence was also the recognition of the richness of that mythical and oral lore which was as late as nineteenth century compiled and translated by such well know European scholars as Aurel Stein, Hinton Knowles and William Crook etc.

The points to be underscored in the context of the Kashmiri short story is that it was the first formal attempt of prose writing in Kashmir. Barring some sporadic translations of some religious texts, Kashmiri language did not have any tradition of prose writing, unlike the English and other European short story traditions. So, the Kashmiri short fiction had to begin from the beginning, though it had one of the richest traditions of folklore in the world at its back. Another point is that the Kashmiri short story had a torturous beginning. It took birth in the violent context of the partition of the subcontinent and the division of the erstwhile state of the Jammu and Kashmir. In this confrontation, the medium of the short story was adopted as a tool of propaganda to reinforce the Indian nationalist narrative on the Kashmir dispute.

In 1950, the first two Kashmiri short stories by two Kashmiri Hindus, referred to as Pandits in common parlance, appeared in the journal Kwangaposh (saffron flower), the official organ of the Cultural Conference, a body of the Progressive Writers from Kashmir. The two stories 'yeli phol gaash' (When it dawned) by Somnath Zutshi and 'javeabi card' (The reply card) by Dinanath Nadim produced enthusiasm among local writers for having adopted the Kashmiri language, the principal identity mark of the Kashmiri community. Soon many writers picked up the momentum and produced a number of short stories.

The Kashmiri short story is deeply embedded in the native soil of Kashmir and is the ace reflection of the rich and variegated experiences of cultural and social life of Kashmir. The Kashmiri short story is emblematic of the ethnic and cultural consciousness of the collective Kashmiri community. Akhter Mohiuddin and Amin Kamil stand apart from the rest in view of their keen observation of Kashmir's cultural life and its dexterous depiction in their short fiction.

Akhter Mohiuddin

Akhtar began his literary career as an Urdu writer but he soon shifted to Kashmiri, his mother tongue and emerged as the best short story writer the Kashmiri language has produced so far. His career of creative writing is spread over more than 55 years during which he produced masterpieces like 'Dand Wazun' (The Brawl), 'Daryaayi Hund Yezaar' (The Bridal

Pyjamas), 'Aapan Hor Jang' (Aapa lost the fight) and 'Aadam Chhu Ajab Zaat' (Man is a strange breed). He extracted his characters from the local life but added such hues to them which make them universally appealing.

Sath Sanghar (Seven peaks) was the first collection of his stories which was published in 1955. It was also the first collection of Kashmiri short stories, as such. His second collection was *Sonzal* (Rainbow) which carries his seven stories and was published in 1959. His third collection was *71979 and other stories*. He anchored his stories and their characters in the socio-cultural landscape of Kashmir. For Akhter, what was important was not any ideological frame of mind but the real character who lived in a particular point of time in a particular locale of Kashmir. That is why all his stories were successful experiments in the genre. His short story 'Dand Wazun' (The brawl) can be claimed to be the first serious and successful short story in the Kashmiri language. The story is a genuinely creative attempt of extracting a slice from the ordinary life of a scavenger couple:

Instantly Breese Watul stood up and tossed a few slaps on Ashma's head and then dragged her throughout the room with her braid. Fortunately, Ashma did not catch fire from the hearth otherwise she would have got burnt down whole. The vessel full of trots was boiling on the hearth.

(Mohiuddin 12)

This is how the story shows a squabble between the spouses consummating in a moment of love and affection. The couple in the story belongs to the lowest rung of the Kashmiri society, called *Waatal* locally, who are looked down upon by Kashmiris themselves but who constitute an inseparable part of the Kashmiri ethnography.

Another story of his, 'daryaye hund yazzare' (The bridal pajamas) is the celebration of a moment of intimacy between an aged couple. Naber Shala, an old artisan while retexturing a shawl in his shanty, needs scissors. His wife Khotoon Ded goes around looking for scissors. Rummaging through the shelved bundles in the store room, she comes across her bridal pajamas and is overcome by the fond memories of her nuptial day. Meanwhile, Naber Shala enters the room and, finding his wife lost in the memory of her youthful days, urges her to wear the pajamas. Initially, Khotoon Ded due to her coyness resists but finally gives in. While wearing the trousers, she almost falls down when Naber Shalla instantly holds her in his hands. It is precisely at this time that their son-in-law enters the shanty and finding them engaged in a moment of intimacy, simply walks out. The two are overcome by a strong sense of shame. Finally, Naber Shalla consoles himself and his wife by saying that, "Everyone is a king in his own way" (quoted in Shah 47). The event which is not ordinary from the local standards of ethics and propriety given the sensitivities of relations involved is depicted through the most possible natural idiom.

Kashmir has historically been a poor place. But over the years though it has economically improved but its political plight is yet to be redeemed. Akhter's story 'Sheene Jung' is an apt comment on the kind of inhuman behavior moneyed class breeds when they have all power and pelf concentrated in them. The story is set in a typical Kashmiri locale:

It was heavily snowing for the last five days now. And the cold was so severe that whatever little snow fell, it froze. For these few days, the people had three times thrown the snow down from their rooftops. Even the roads had heaps of snow on them.

(Mohiuddin 100)

After this graphic description of Kashmir's winter, the author introduces us to the life and the characters who live in this winter. Khoje Mome, the richest man in the area has arranged for a live show of the traditional game of snow fight. One of the players the Khoja has hired is a sick aged man who pleads to Mome Khoje to spare him in view of his ill health but he is paid no heed. During the game, happening in accompaniment with the dainty dishes being served to the guests, Mome Khoje throws *goshtaba*, the sweetest of these dishes, towards the players as they slacken due to severe cold. The aged player dies in the night due to his pneumonia which had got aggravated because of his gaming in the day. The next day as Mome Khoje pays a visit to the dead player's house to condole the demise, people are awed by the generous gesture of the rich man and comment like this: "This is called generosity. Such a rich man has come to condole the death of this penniless man. Another one remarks: That is why even God has been generous to him. I have heard the other day he had organized a game of *goshtaba* fight instead of snow fight" (Mohiuddin 107). The story is an apt comment on the exploitative economic system prevalent in the Kashmiri society and the gullibility of the masses who are fooled by the outward kindness and generosity of the exploiters.

The armed insurgency in Kashmir against the Indian rule also gets reflected in such short stories of his as 'aatank vadi' (The terrorist), 'nav bemaere' (New disease) and 'Jali hindy danda phel' (The broken teeth of Jalla Bibi). These stories are like postcards from a country which seemed outlandish in the twentieth century world in view of the most brutal oppression it was subjected to in the contemporary world.

In 'Jali hindy dande phel', Jaleela, an educated and bold girl from the city helps her aged father cross the road on a curfewed day. Her audacious reply to the soldier's blunt refusal to stop beating her father enrages him so much that he alongwith all his colleagues pounces on her and beats her to pulp. Next morning her illiterate father is seen searching for something at the same spot on the road and mumbling to himself, "The broken teeth of Jalli.... They must have fallen here" (Mohiuddin 91). The story emphasizes the fact that even education means nothing in absence of political rights. Even a law degree is not able to save Jaleela from the wrath of the soldiers whom she tries to argue with to save her aged father from their brutal beating. Another interesting fact in the context of this story is that Jaleela

has to take recourse to Hindi/Urdu, the non-native language in Kashmir to converse with soldiers where the native language is Kashmiri, because the soldiers are not natives but have been brought in from outside. The search for the broken pieces of Jaleela's teeth symbolically refers to the search for the native identity which is lost in the kind of set up that is in place in contemporary Kashmir.

In 'Atank Vadi', Shafiq, a young kid, is fascinated with the gun in the hands of the omnipresent army personnel around him. Once, on coming across a patrol party of the soldiers, he starts crying and beseeching his accompanist lady, probably his grandmother, to arrange a gun for him too. The soldier on coming to know that the kid is not scared of him but is asking for a gun instantly blurts out "Bastards, they are all terrorists" (Mohiuddin 125). The story is a punching comment on the effect of militarization on young minds in conflict zones.

The story 'nav beamear' again narrates the negative effects of militarisation and its consequences on society. The unnamed character in focus in the story is taken to a doctor for the treatment of his eccentric behavior. "When he reaches home, he does not enter the door. He stands outside the door for hours as if waiting for something. Then he turns back instead of getting in" (Mohiuddin 124). The doctor has not prescribed any medicine or therapy or any medication for treatment. He has simply recommended that "when he reaches the door of his house, he should simply be frisked" (Mohiuddin 124). The treatment works and there is improvement in his disease which has struck the place, of late.

The story 'Election' is a satirical punch on the way elections are conducted in Kashmir. The story shows a triangular contest happening. "On the voting day, a procession comes out of the green flag holders followed by scores of young kids, some teens and a few adults. Next day, the victory of the red flag holders is announced. In the evening the red flag holders too bring out a procession followed by the same scores of young kids, some teens and a few adults" (Mohiuddin 98). The net outcome of this electoral win and loss in the context of Kashmir is shown to be just this:

Haji Saheb (the winning side) would not haul the timber now to the official timber depot but to his own courtyard. He would not distribute it among the people against the official ration cards but sell it after sawing for a hefty sum. The Katcher (other winning side) would send the word around to purchase cement, iron and other such stuff from them in case anyone needed it. They were construction contractors of official assignments. The Dars (the losing side) would complain that the other side had lost all propriety and, above all, stole in their business. They would sell locally made shawls etc but would also carry a fistful of opium under cover. Only God knows better.

(Mohiuddin 99)

The elections in Kashmir have come to simply mean exploitation of the local population by both winners and losers. It does not mean the restoration of the human and

political rights of Kashmiris. Nor does it mean their representation in the process of law-making at any level. It is simply a drama which is enacted to vindicate a point India needs to uphold its control over the territory of Kashmir.

The "scores of young kids, some teens and a few adults" represent Kashmiris who just follow anybody who fools them and exploits their vulnerability in absence of their human and political rights. They just behave like cattle, willing to follow anyone who leads them for personal interests.

These stories despite set in one of the most militarized conflict zones in the world with contesting ownership claims of Pakistan and India are attempts are producing genuine art which transcends any category and could be claimed to be their plight by the sufferers of any conflict in the world.

Amin Kamil

Amin Kamil is one of the defining litterateurs of the Kashmiri language and literature. Besides being a poet of unparalleled lyricism, Kamil was a prolific short story writer who painted Kashmir on the canvass of his stories. His forte lies not in narrating the incidents but in going beyond and delving deeper into the working of the Kashmiri mind. His stories remain the best example of depicting the stock Kashmiri response to certain situations. Kashmiris, due to their inherent simplicity of mind and gullibility are easily vulnerable to any kind of political exploitation.

Kamil excels others in portraying the cultural landscape and the behavioural patterns of ethnic Kashmiris. His story 'koker jung' (The cockfight) still remains the unparalleled delineation of ethnic unpolished Kashmiris. The story is about the squabbling neighbourly relations between two Kashmiri women who feel jealous of each other in everything. Finally, their jealousy touches new heights when Jaane Bitch, one of the two, gets a new rooster as pet. Shah Maal, her neighbor, forces her husband to get one for her too. One day, as the cocks engage in a fierce fight for dominance, the two women see their chronic jealousy in action in the fight between their respective fowls. The way Kamil describes the two cocks almost makes them come alive in the minds of the readers:

Jani's cock and her own were struggling desperately with each other, raising clouds of dust around them. Jani the Skinny was enjoying the cockfight from her window. Shahmal discerned a flush of joy on her face. She was apparently sure of her cock's victory, perhaps because his comb was smaller but thicker, his wattle clung to his throat, and his sturdy limbs made him look a thorough fighter. He had trounced all the other cocks of the neighborhood in fight.... The feathers on the cocks' necks stood erect in perfect circles. Their heads trembled and shook with rage. This shaking seemed to have electrified their feathers. Their bodies seemed elongated and the tail feathers swollen. They glowered at each other and stretching their trembling necks, transmitted messages of fire and rage. Recklessly they attacked each other, pecking and tearing sharply with their beaks.... The cocks raised hell, struggling furiously. They plucked each other's feathers till blood streamed forth.

(Kamil neabinternational.org)

The story focuses on the uncouth psyche of two women caught in the exploitative set-up of the early twentieth century Kashmir.

The two stories of Kamil, 'Phatak' and 'Sawal cchu kaluk', bring into focus the exploitative administrative set-up of the ruling class that belonged to a different religion from that of its subjects. A prominent note of Kamil's stories is a satirical punch which refers to a strong sense of humour Kashmiris possess. All his stories show the working of the Kashmiri mind and at the same time shed light on the satire, at times bordering absurdity, it adopts to look at things. Here is a passage from the story 'sawal cchu kaluk' in which the officials of the two police stations are caught in contestation over a dead body in view of their respective jurisdictions:

But this dead body..... look, it will decompose..... for how long will it.....
He did not let me complete my point...

Let it decompose... the question is that of the head.... Which side was it?...
Let the dispute continue so long as that question is not addressed.

I was dumbstruck. What else could I say?

(Quoted in Anhaar 82)

The story metaphorically refers to the larger dispute about Kashmir between India and Pakistan both of which claim it to be theirs. So the people continue to suffer as the question remains unaddressed.

'Jahanami' is another story of Kamil which limns the darker side of life as people grapple with their systems to change it. Though this story has been written in mythical method but it does not stretch to the mythological lengths. Zajje Pather has been a locality in the far off corner of the rural Kashmir in the ancient Kashmir. Here is how the author describes the locale of the story:

People no more believe in such tales because such things don't happen around them now. But that does not mean that such a thing had never happened in Zajje Pather. Nevertheless, Zajje Pather is not extinct. We can even now go there and find the traces of that locality which must have existed there once. It's a meadow now where many shepherds, in their huts, rear herds of sheep. But there was a time when around six thousand souls of both men and women lived there. It had five graveyards to bury its dead.

It is said that the area was well off. Once the earning and fit-for-marriage only son of an old lady named Sul Ded died there. She virtually got mad. Seven of her blighted children had died in her womb and this was the only child who

was finally born wholesome after tying many votive knots....

(Kamil 85)

The villagers are shocked to see his body disinterred the following day. This is how it begins and slowly takes the form of a convention:

When no dead in the Zajje Pather remained without the theft of their shroud, it gradually became a convention there. Now, no one was angered by or afraid of the shroud theft because for the last twenty years they had been witnessing this. However, when they would bury the dead, the following day, they would visit the grave to set it right...

Finally Ganna Bab on his death bed confesses to have been stealing the shroud of the dead over the years. With his death, all the villagers heaved a sigh of relief for such an inhuman practice to have come to an end. However, they are shocked to see the naked body of Ganna Bab lying outside his grave on the following day. Not only was his shroud stolen but the body is also disrespected. Everyone is scared to death:

"We won't find the like of Ganna Bab. He would just steal the shroud and not disrespect the body. This devil is worse than the beast...."

It is said that afterwards the people would pray for Ganna Bab and curse the new fiend.

(Kamil 93-97)

In this story, Kamil borrows from the mythical anecdote and comments on the contemporary. All attempts of Kashmiris to improve their lot have ended in cipher. With every change in the system, they end up pining for the earlier and cursing the new one.

In 'phatak', Kamil again takes recourse to a past anecdote to comment on the present of Kashmir. Here is how the comment commences:

I casually asked Dwarka Nath, "It's fine that it was your duty to arrest the agitating people but what the hell is this that you enter the houses and grab the innocents from their homes and put them behind the bars."

What Dwarka Nath told me in response to my query reminded me of a 26-year old incident when the Maharaja Hari Singh ruled the state.

(Zahoor ed. 73)

The narrator during the feudal rule had once seen the cops pulling some half a dozen cows. They were followed by a few women and small kids crying

and pleading them. When the narrator asks the cops about the whole episode, he is told that the preceding day, some cows had intercepted the cavalcade of the Maharaja when he was driving home from the airport. Instantly he had ordered the suspension of the concerned police officials, and the DIG had ordered that all wandering cows be put in the *phatak*. Any cop who is found derelict in his duty would be suspended:

We too have our families. We won't take our livelihood casually for anyone else. We too have to prove to have been alert to our duty. We did not find any wandering cow around to put in the *phatak*. Therefore, we pulled these cows from their cowsheds to put them in the *phatak*. Yes, they will have to pay the penalty of ten *annas*, we are giving them those ten *annas*. What twist is there in this.

(Zahoor ed. 73)

An incident in the so-called democratic era reminds the narrator of something equally horrible which had happened during the feudal regime.

Akhter Mohiuddin and Amin Kamil are the two great short story writers who gave a new direction to the art of the short story writing in Kashmiri language. Together they form the canon of the Kashmiri short story, inspiring the generations of writers who followed them. Thematically also, they remain relevant referring to the vision they possessed about the future of Kashmir.

References:

- Muzmar, Majeed. *Kashmiri Drama aur Fiction*. Srinagar: Book Media, 1999. Print.
- Saqi, Moti Lal. "Kashmiri Short Story: Origin and Evolution." Trans. Abid Ahmad *Sheeraza*. Apr-June, 2014. X, 2. Abid Ahmad ed. Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. Print.
- Khan, Mohammad Shafi. "Kashmiri Short Story: A Sideview in Symbol and Theme." *Sheeraza*. Apr-June, 2014. X, 2. Abid Ahmad ed. Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. Print.
- Mohiuddin, Akhter. "Dande Wazun". *Afsaame Majmooe*. Qazi Zahoor ed. Srinagar: Kashmir University, 1995. Print.
- Mohiuddin, Akhter. "Daryayi Hund Yazaar". *Aash*. I, 6. Asma Shah ed. Srinagar. 2007. Print. Mohiuddin, Akhter. *71979 te baaqi afsaame*. Srinagar: Book Bank. Undated. Print.

Mainul Hasan Chowdhury

Khan Touseef Osman

Violent action is unclear to most of those who get caught up in it. Experience is fragmentary; cause and effect, why and how, are torn apart. Only sequence exists. First this then that. And afterward, for those who survive, a lifetime of trying to understand.

Salman Rushdie, *Fury*

I'm tuneless in the pain of ineffability.

Binoy Mojumdar

Truth for anyone is a very complex thing. For a writer, what you leave out says as much as those things you include. What lies beyond the margin of the text? ...When we tell a story we exercise control, but in such a way as to leave a gap, an opening. It is a version, but never the final one. And perhaps we hope that the silences will be heard by someone else, and the story can continue, can be retold. When we write we offer the silence as much as the story. Words are the part of silence that can be spoken. ...Do you remember the story of Philemel who is raped and then has her tongue ripped out by the rapist so that she can never tell? I believe in fiction and the power of stories because that way we speak in tongues.

Jeanette Winterson, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*

James Berger in 1997 in a review of *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* by Cathy Caruth, *Representing Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* by Dominick LaCapra and *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* by Kall Tal enquired as to why trauma should attract such attention all of a sudden and become a pivotal subject connecting so many disciplines (569). The answer is all too obvious to us today who have the historical knowledge of violence of the twentieth century and the experience of the ominous start of the twenty-first century. The new millennium awakened to bloodshed of an unprecedented scale on 9/11, two subsequent wars followed in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Arab world was shaken with enormous loss of life and property in Libya and Syria. The legacy of violence we inherited from the twentieth century, "a century of trauma" as Shoshana Felman calls it (171), has posed new existential and epistemological questions to human civilization—questions that trauma theory is trying to make sense of and answer. This accounts for the pervasiveness of trauma theory across a good number of disciplines including literature, critical theory, history and historiography, the social sciences, legal studies, psychology and psychiatry, etc., since trauma has impacted almost all - if not all - the spheres of life.

Though theorizing about traumatic experiences started as early as Sigmund Freud's publication of *Studies on Hysteria* in 1895, trauma theory has gained currency in the latter half of the twentieth century, especially in the 1990's, in response not only to the experiences of massive brutality and horror of the holocaust of two World Wars, the Vietnam and other

local, civil, ideological and ethnic wars, political and racial persecutions, natural disasters of great destruction, famines and epidemics but also to a new awareness of such areas as domestic violence, child abuse and incest. That is, out of ashes of catastrophes of all sorts—man-made and natural, social and individual - emerged a new critical perspective: trauma theory. Felman attributes the contemporary enthusiasm in theorizing about trauma to "three interrelated twentieth-century occurrences":

(1) the discovery of psychoanalysis and, with it, the discovery of trauma as a new conceptual center, an essential dimension of human and historical experience and a new type of understanding of historical causality and of historic temporality; (2) the unprecedented number of disastrous events on a mass scale that wreaked havoc on the twentieth century and whose massively traumatic ravages were rendered possible by the development of weapons of mass destruction and technologies of death that allowed for unprecedented assaults on the human body; (3) the unprecedented and repeated use of the instruments of law to cope with the traumatic legacies and the collective injuries left by these events. (2)

Trials and testimonies of the traumatized, through media representations or otherwise, have been the center of public and academic attention particularly since the Nuremberg trials and have indeed called for a new theoretical outlook. Dori Laub's radical pronouncement of the "collapse of witnessing" questions, ironically, the legitimacy of legal practices concerning traumatic experiences, generating a widespread anxiety if truth can ever be told in testimonies. (64)

The term "trauma theory" first appears in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). The theory, arguably, stems from her insightful interpretation and elaboration of Freud's deliberations on traumatic experiences in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1889) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). What Freud once called "traumatic neurosis," the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 officially acknowledged and termed as "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD), a concept central to trauma theory. Cathy Caruth defines PTSD as:

a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with the numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. ...[T]he event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. And thus the traumatic symptom cannot be interpreted, simply, as a distortion of reality, nor as the lending of unconscious meaning to a reality it wishes to ignore, nor as the representation of what once was wished.

(Caruth, *Trauma* 3-5)

A traumatic event occurs too immediately and overwhelmingly for the consciousness to record, but its images come back to the survivor belatedly and repeatedly. What seems, therefore, to be missing in memory in effect repeats itself in the forms of dreams, flashbacks, hallucinations and other intrusive elements at a later time with all its exactness and literality.

The images do not reappear distortedly or symbolically, but with a literality that perplexed Freud while he was treating World War I veterans plagued with PTSD, because the literal images they encountered in dreams could not be explained in terms of the dream theory he devised earlier in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Dreams, Freud referred to as "the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (qtd in Jane Milton *et al* 22-23). Dreaming gives an outlet to the dark desires *repressed* in the unconscious or Id, so that sleep is not disturbed by primitive sexual and aggressive impulses. Also, dreaming involves symbolization, distortion and displacement of images which did not occur in the veterans' dreams. The literality of their dreams evidences that they are not the consequence of any repression and their dreams do not creep in through any secret tunnel from the unconscious. In explaining the war veterans' and other traumatized patients' dreams, Freud introduces the concept of "latency," a concept that accounts for the belatedness as well as the literality of the dreams (Freud 84). Caruth's comment on the idea of latency captures its paradoxical coincidence with literality:

The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. ...If repression, in trauma, is replaced by latency, this is significant so far as its blankness—the space of unconscious—is paradoxically what precisely preserves the event in its literality.

(*Trauma* 7-8)

However, a profounder crisis lies ahead: the crisis or collapse of truth, one that stems from the collapse of comprehensibility or understanding and ultimately results in the collapse of witnessing. Trauma leaves a fracture in the consciousness, a blank space in memory, so that the actual event goes missing from the normal sequence of thoughts or recollection only to return later in dreams or flashbacks. This leaves the survivors of trauma baffled about their experiences as they cannot place them in any specific time and space. Because images of the actual events come back to them not in the form of usual recollection but in flashbacks, for example, which they cannot pinpoint to have happened in any temporal or spatial frame, these images elude their understanding. Collapse of comprehensibility or understanding occurs precisely for the survivors' bafflement about the intrusive elements they encounter, and with it comes a doubt of these elements' referentiality outside of their mind. The truth of the traumatic experiences, therefore, becomes doubtful. Incomprehensibility, doubt and the collapse of truth invalidate all possibility of witnessing, whether in a trial or more informal circumstances. Witnesses of traumatic events often find themselves in a position where the demand on them is to articulate the inarticulable. They are asked to tell the truth of which they are doubtful, about an event of which they have no comprehensibility. Collapses of comprehensibility, truth and witnessing question the act of recording of traumatic events and have radicalized the way memory - individual or collective - is interpreted.

Survivors of trauma are not active agents who can consciously recall their disastrous experiences, but are invaded by absolutely accurate and precise *images* of traumatic re-

enactments. They are *possessed* and *haunted* by the images, which, while vivid and exact, are not accessible at will. In fact, the reappearance of the images is accompanied by an amnesia, which Caruth and several other researchers refer to as a paradox:

The ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it. And this suggests that what returns in the flashback is not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by a later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness. Indeed, the literal registration of an event—the capacity to continually, in the flashback, reproduce it in exact detail—appears to be connected, in traumatic experience, precisely with the way it *escapes* full consciousness as it occurs.

(Caruth, *Trauma* 152-153)

Indeed, the experiences of trauma remain unintegrated into understanding, thus making it impossible for them to become "narrative memory". They cannot be put into the normal sequence of events, so are impossible to recall. The unassimilability of traumatic experiences into understanding and memory has crucial consequences for history and historiography, since history is a form of collective remembrance. With the collapse of witnessing, an uncertainty looms over the historiography of major historical traumas. The ring of doubt around testimonial truths has rendered historiography as an attempt to communicate the incommunicable and/or comprehend the incomprehensible:

Testimony is, therefore, a *distortion* of truth, an endeavor to fill in the blank space of consciousness with reconstruction of images encountered in flashbacks, an effort to understand the un-understandable. Only in their distortion is it possible to communicate the horror of traumatic experiences. Some, such as Claude Lanzmann, have even refused to make any attempt at understanding and denied to express trauma in the form of narrative memory, which is essentially the memory that tries to make sense of what has no sense at all, articulate the blank space with imperfections and *pretend* to have comprehensibility of the incomprehensible. However, articulation of trauma, even the refusal to articulate it, has significance in trauma theory, for it opens up the possibility of a new kind of witnessing of the incommunicable and listening to it, which, for Caruth, should revise our ways of viewing history and cultures:

This speaking and this listening—a speaking and a listening *from the site of trauma*—does not rely... on what we simply know of each other, but on what we don't yet know of our own traumatic pasts. In a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves.

(*Trauma* 11)

However, the promise of trauma for providing a "link between cultures" has met with theoretical failure. Until very recently, as Stef Craps points out, trauma theory has largely been a Western phenomenon and its key assumptions appear to be Eurocentric in that

they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas. (2)

In fact, the Eurocentrism of the area undermines its prospect of restoring ethics to critical theory and of cross-cultural engagement. Psychoanalytic trauma theory makes certain assumptions, such as the dissociated self, as fundamental to human nature irrespective of cultural differences. Thus, it risks overlooking the specificities of non-Western cultures "on their own terms, and in their own terms" (Craps 6). Susan Y. Najita, however, observes that post-colonial literary representations of non-Western cultures, in the medium of fiction at least, are attempts at reclaiming the past in the cultures' own terms, for they manifest a resurgence of the pre-colonial and colonial pasts in a manner similar to traumatic re-enactments. (19)

Not only for its consideration of cultural specificities, literature is also important for the trauma theorists because of its ability to accommodate both the comprehensible and the incomprehensible. Literary language simultaneously defies as well as claims understanding, and all the pioneer trauma theorists—beginning with Freud and including Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dominick LaCapra, etc.—turned to literature for theoretical support. Literature, they find, can contain knowing and not knowing, the known and unknown, the knowable and unknowable all at once in language, a medium that itself oscillates between the expressible and inexpressible, the possible and impossible. Psychoanalysis, in its extension to trauma theory, makes use of this strange nature of literature and its medium:

...[L]iterature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet.

(Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 3)

And, therefore, Caruth concludes, theoretical language of trauma must be somewhat "literary" (*Unclaimed Experience* 5). Felman, also, in theorizing about the link between trial and trauma, argues that "justice" could only be attained in literature, not in conventional legal trials, insofar as trials aim at a "closure" of trauma, an impossibility that literature appreciates, since, in literature, traumatic experiences remain open with all their horror, nightmares, silence and cognitive and linguistic breakdowns (Felman 8). Literary

representation of trauma, albeit indirect, could be referential to the extent that "correspondence ... is not ... understood in terms of positivism or essentialism but as a metaphor that signifies a referential relation (or truth claim) that is more or less direct or indirect (probably generically more indirect in fiction [or in literature, in general] than in historiography)" (LaCapra ch. 1). Literary referentiality involves the communication of a plausible "feel" for traumatic experiences and their emotional dimensions which should be difficult for history to convey (LaCapra ch. 1). Unlike the restrictive methods of historiography, literature offers greater flexibility in communicating trauma by being able to contain cognitive and linguistic fractures that a traumatic event is always associated with.

Trauma theory offers an excellent tool for researchers of literature in the Indian subcontinent in the sense that people's individual and collective existence of this part of the world is replete with massive traumas. The history of colonial oppression, the unimaginable scale of violence involved during the transition from the colonial to post-colonial era, the geo-political ruptures in the creation of three countries i.e. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and frequent communal riots in the region have leaked into its literatures. Most significantly, the Partition of India and Pakistan has been one of the major pre-occupations of creative artists. The parallel development in the fields of trauma and memory studies in the second half of the twentieth century in the Western world has informed literary works of the region as well. As a result, a considerable body of literary works has developed over the years that should be of much interest to the researchers exploiting the insights of trauma theory. It is, however, necessary to keep in mind the Eurocentric biases of the theory that may undermine genuine research endeavors seeking to explore South Asian literary texts. A revision of the theory taking into account the specificities of the post-colonial South Asian cultures is absolutely essential before it could be used to yield new insights into the individual and collective existence of the region through its literature.

References:

- Berger, James. *Trauma and Literary Theory Contemporary Literature*. Vol. 38, No. 3. pp. 569-582. Washington: Washington University Press, 1997. Print.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. Print.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Print.
- Craps, Stef. *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pdf file.
- Dori Laub. "Truth and Testimony: The Process of the Struggle" in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995. Print.

- Felman, Shoshana. *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism*. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1939. Print.
- Milton, Jane, Caroline Polmear, and Julia Fabricius. *A Short Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. London: Sage Publications, 2004. Pdf file.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore (Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Epub file.
- Lanzmann, Claude. *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust: the Complete Text of the Film*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. Print.
- Najita, Susan Y. *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Pdf file.

The Changing Stereotypes of Kashmiri Language Among School Children of Srinagar

Nayer Rizwana

Introduction

Kashmiri, though spoken by the dominant majority in the valley, has remained the official language of Kashmir for a very brief period, irrespective of whether the state was led by a monarch or a democratically elected leader, or whether the ruler was an inhabitant of the state or an outsider. One of the reasons for this may have been that, languages with stronger literary traditions and privilege like Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic thrived in Kashmir and overshadowed the native language. In this connection Kak writes:

...the patronization and allocation of prestigious domains to these non-native languages consequently led to a decrease in the prestige of Kashmiri, and Kashmiri has played and is still playing second fiddle if not 'third fiddle', to whatever language held or is holding sway. Presently in Kashmir, English holds the most prestigious position followed by Urdu and the last slot is allotted to Kashmiri. This also has, to a great extent, altered the mindset of the average Kashmiri, and his socio-psychological profile also indicates a leaning towards English. (40)

English made an appearance in Kashmir in the late 19th century with the coming of Christian missionaries. They set up schools and focused on imparting English education. This influenced the governments, and they installed English as the medium of instruction at the Undergraduate and Post-graduate level, Urdu being the medium till 10th class. The missionary and privately run schools had English as the medium of education right from the kindergarten. In 2003, the government too made a change- over from Urdu as a medium of instruction to English in all the state-run schools. However, on paper, Urdu continues to be the state official language.

Urdu was introduced as the official language in 1907 replacing Persian. After independence, keeping in view the multilingual character of the country, all the states had the freedom to use any major regional language as their official language. As expected, most states chose native languages of their own respective regions. However, the government of Jammu and Kashmir decided to continue the use of Urdu despite the fact that Kashmiri is listed as one of the major Indian languages in the VIII schedule of the Constitution of India. Currently, J&K is the only state with Urdu as the official language as it somehow links its diverse regions having different mother tongues.

Objectives:

This paper attempts to find the stereotypes associated with Kashmiri language vis-à-vis Urdu and English, the two other languages of interaction among school children, studying

at three different schools of Srinagar. The three schools roughly correspond to the socio-economically lower, the lower middle and the middle, and the upper middle and the upper class. When this study was initiated, it was believed that stereotypes of Kashmiri, i.e. the attitudes and perceptions, as indicated by earlier studies (Kak 2002; Ara 2009) would score lower as against Urdu and English but what emerged during this research was the surprising presence of a strong undercurrent among the English speaking respondents of the prestigious school in favour of their mother tongue. Rating of Kashmiri, as the sweetest, most poetic and prestigious language by these respondents is loaded with possibilities. This kind of attitude exhibited by them augurs well for the future development and sustainability of Kashmiri language, as they see it, interestingly, linked to their Kashmiri identity.

Global threat to indigenous languages

Till recently, the utility of Kashmiri, though at a lower pedestal in the language hierarchy has always survived despite the lack of royal/official patronage (Kak 2005). However, with the advent of globalization, Kashmiri seems to be losing its domains, yielding them without protest to English quite in consonance with what Van Dijk (1997) expressed in an editorial entitled 'The Imperialism of English' that English increasingly intrudes on territory occupied earlier by other languages.

English has been viewed as a threatening force to many languages of the world, and to the cultural identity of different peoples. Phillipson (1992), while exploring the contemporary phenomenon of the spread and dominance of English, perceives a sinister design behind it. His 'Linguistic Imperialism' analyzes the British Council's use of rhetoric to promote English, among other things. The imperialistic spirit of English has been viewed as dangerous and hampering the freedom of people and countries in the world. English is eventually comprehended in its colonial context and hegemonic tendencies including the arrogance and neo-colonial policies of the US.

As Kachru (135) puts it, "The universalization of English and the power of this language have come at a price; for some, the implications are agonizing, while for others they are a matter of ecstasy." That English was a mixed blessing for Indians was seen clearly by Gandhi in these statements, "To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave us. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us" (84); "English has usurped the dearest place in our hearts and dethroned our mother tongues." (202)

Current status of Kashmiri

Language death is an area of great concern. Crystal (2002) believes that death of a language is tantamount to the death of a person, for languages have no existence without people. "...the Kashmiri language is going through gradual attrition due to the impact of languages of wider communication" (Kachru 7). This according to Kachru, will cause the decay and "death" of Kashmiri. The last two decades have witnessed Kashmir being impacted by the forces of globalization, causing tremendous changes. In Kashmir,

globalization is seen to be synonymous with English and its knowledge is believed to be the key to success. With the advent of the internet and the associated store house of knowledge that lies within reach, use of computers has become imperative. Access to the internet is possible through computers, which can be operated only, if one possesses at least a working knowledge of English. It is estimated that around eighty percent of the electronically stored information is in English. It therefore builds a mindset where people who have aspirations, have no other option but to use this language. This realization appears to have influenced the socio-psychological attitudes of Kashmiris. Kak analyzes it thus:

This is because of the realization among all generations that learning English is a prerequisite to 'the good things in life'...attitudes and views of Kashmiris have also been observed to show a change...with English speakers being stereotyped highest especially in the attributes 'Intelligent, Ambitious, Practical and Modern'...indicating what English and its speakers symbolize for the Kashmiri native speaker. (42-43)

This indicates that Kashmiris hold English in very high esteem, Kashmiri, which earlier occupied the second rung on the linguistic ladder, has dropped to the third place with English firmly establishing itself on the topmost rung after displacing Urdu.

Although bilingualism in Kashmir has been traced to as early as the ninth century A.D. and the presence of a dominant language in contact with Kashmiri has been a rule rather than an exception yet never has a foreign language affected the fate of Kashmiri to an extent where "not knowing Kashmiri may be considered fashionable but not knowing English... a sign of being backward" (Kak 2005). Ironically, Kashmiri was resuscitated when cries of 'English but not at the cost of mother tongue', reverberated throughout the world, and woke up Kashmiris from their deep slumber. Things started looking up as Kashmiri was conferred the status of a compulsory subject in all the schools of the valley up to the secondary level since November 2008. This resuscitated Kashmiri language and the immediate, inadvertent beneficiaries were the parents of school children, who had no choice but to get acquainted with the Kashmiri script as children needed help with homework. Thus Kashmiri literate readership is on the rise, a welcome sign after years of neglect. Although this has given a new lifeline to Kashmiri, it has in no way waned the popularity of English.

The last two decades have seen a meteoric rise in the prestige of English in Kashmir and it has emerged as a strong competitor for not only the mother tongue but for Urdu as well, which continues to be the most commonly used language after Kashmiri in the verbal repertoire of an educated Kashmiri. Till recently, Urdu was used by Kashmiris as a link language to communicate with people of the country, but things are fast changing with the youth switching over to English for this purpose. Urdu is also fast disappearing from signboards, name-plates and letter heads.

METHODOLOGY

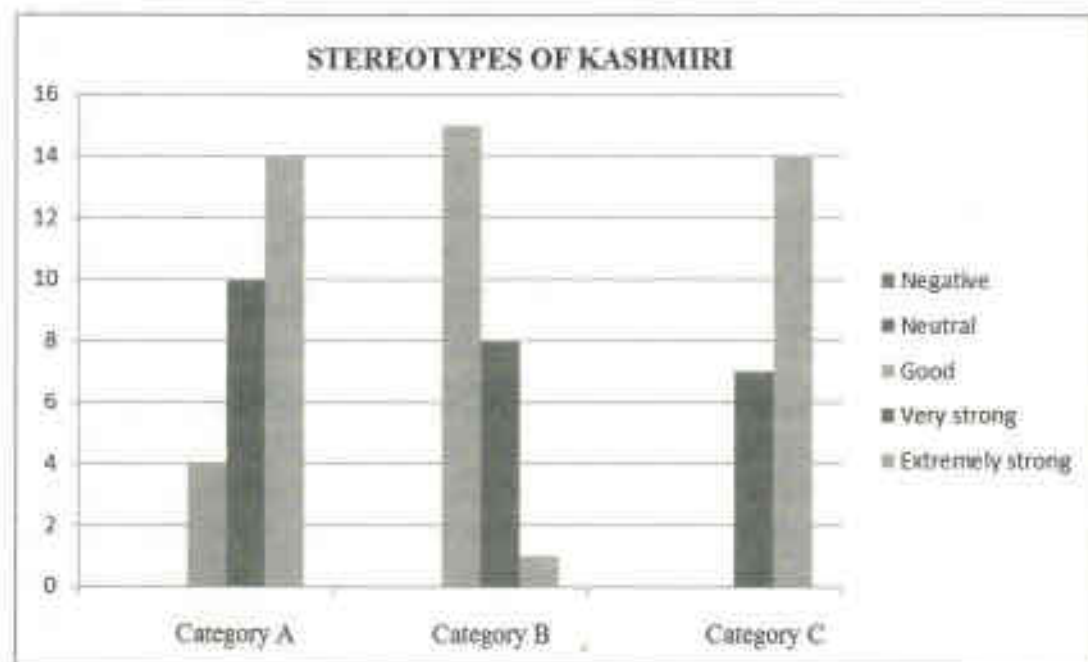
To study the stereotypes of Kashmiri vis-à-vis Urdu and English, data was collected from 73 respondents of class 9, studying in three different schools of Srinagar city namely, Iqbal Mission School and Delhi Public School. Since the study was socio-psychological in nature, it was felt appropriate to collect the sample from children belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds. The students from the selected schools came from different environments in terms of family income, parents' educational level and use of language within family, school and outside domain. A questionnaire was administered to respondents to elicit their response.

The students were asked to rate the three languages in terms of the attributes of honorable, sweet, poetic, grammatical, communicative, modern and prestigious. A five point scale was used to analyze the data. They were also asked to state their choice regarding the official language of the State. For the purpose of convenience the schools were categorized as A i.e. Government School, B i.e. Iqbal Mission School and C i.e. Delhi Public School.

Stereotypes of Kashmiri

At category A, 14% of respondents expressed that they had 'good' stereotypes of Kashmiri, 36% 'very strong' and 50% 'extremely strong'. At category B, 63% professed to have 'good', 33% 'strong' and 4% 'extremely strong'. At category C 33% had 'strong' and 67% 'extremely strong' stereotypes of Kashmiri.

Figure:1 Stereo types of Kashmiri



possessing 'extremely strong' stereotypes of Kashmiri was highest among category C respondents, followed by category A. The highest use of Kashmiri, as revealed through the questionnaire, in all domains of interaction, was made by the sample at category A. The positive stereotypes they had for it were thus easily explained. However, the intriguing pattern exhibited by category C respondents was at variance with the low use of Kashmiri they made in their everyday transactions. This suggested that though they used other languages for this purpose, they felt no bonding with them. The relationship between low Kashmiri usage and its extremely strong stereotypes could be attributed to a rebellion against the existing set up, which instead of initiating them into the mother tongue first, introduces them to another language. In this context, Kak writes:

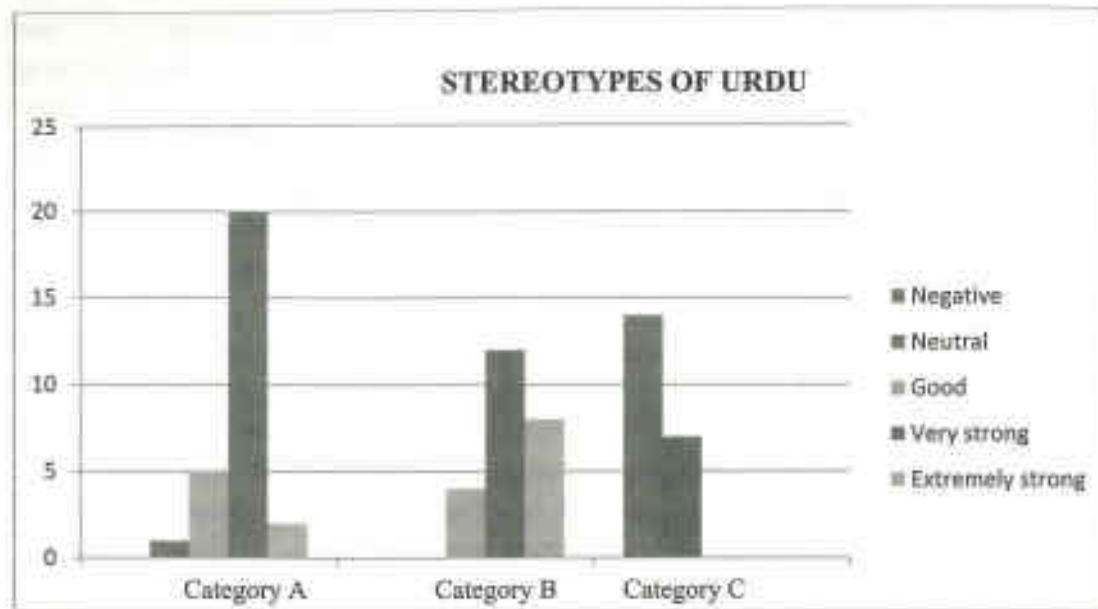
In Srinagar, educated families as well as certain socially mobile uneducated families attempt to inculcate the Urdu speaking habits in their children at home from a very early age. An attempt is also made wherein the children are encouraged to adopt Urdu as their first language. It is a general phenomenon to observe mothers, especially young mothers, talking to their toddlers in English. (83)

Stereotypes of Urdu

Since Urdu usage in all domains was the highest at category B, it followed that the most positive stereotypes of the language were associated with the sample representing this category. At category A, 4% respondents, claimed to have 'neutral stereotypes', 18% 'good', 72% 'very strong' and 7% 'extremely strong'. Category B had 17% claiming 'good', 50% 'very strong' and 33% 'extremely strong' stereotypes. At category C, 76% had 'negative' and remaining 24% 'neutral' stereotypes.

A positive attitude towards Urdu was restricted to the sample at category A and B. Category C sample, did not share this view. Category A and B respondents were more proficient Kashmiri users as compared to C. The response of respondents at category A and B towards Urdu followed a pattern as observed by Kak in his doctoral study, wherein he writes, "A positive attitude towards Urdu ... in a way indicates that the next target for the Kashmiri proficient informant is Urdu. After Urdu proficiency the informant is ready for the next step". (2002:108). Going by this observation, the respondents at the elite schools, who are proficient English users, have no other rung to lay foot on, they occupy the highest pedestal of the linguistic hierarchy and so, coming full circle they go back to their mother tongue. Nevertheless, their negative stereotypes of Urdu seemed to arise from the realization that, they were taught Urdu at the cost of their own tongue. Many respondents voiced this, during my interaction with them.

Figure 2: Stereotypes of Urdu



Stereotypes of English

The comparison across the three categories, with regard to this variable was not as sharply contrasted as in the case of the earlier two variables dealing with the stereotypes of Kashmiri and of Urdu. 4% of respondents at category A claimed to have 'neutral', 32% 'good', 43% 'very strong' and 21% 'extremely strong' stereotypes of English. School B had 17% respondents claiming 'good', 54% 'very strong' and 29% 'extremely strong'. School C had 10% claiming to have 'good', 52% 'very strong' and 38% 'extremely strong' stereotypes of English.

Stereotypes of English found favour across all categories. This was a healthy trend indicating the respondents' acceptance of English in their lives and the awareness of its importance in various spheres. Though findings in this study pointed to the tendency of respondents from each category, to lean towards a specific language, it did not stop them from converging at a point where all acknowledged the advantage of learning English and nurtured a positive attitude towards it.

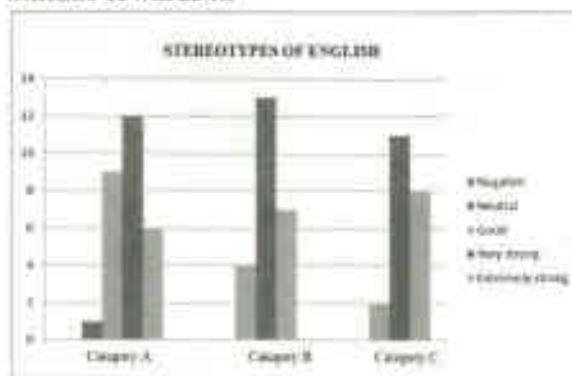


Figure 3: Stereotypes of English

The last question pertaining to the choice of the official language carried two parts. Part (a) asked the respondents to name the language which they would prefer as the official language of the state and Part (b) asked them to state reasons behind their choice. The choice was between Kashmiri, Urdu and English. The response to the first part is presented in a tabular form below.

Table 1: Preference for the official language of the state

| Category | Kashmiri | Urdu | English |
|----------|----------|--------|---------|
| A | 64.28% | 28.57% | 7.15% |
| B | 16.66% | 62.5% | 20.83% |
| C | 85.71% | | 14.29% |

The table above shows a clear leaning towards the mother tongue at category A, where 64.28% wanted Kashmiri, 28.57% Urdu and 7.15% English as the official language of the state. Kashmiri was the choice for the state language with the majority, mainly because of it being the mother tongue, and thus most widely spoken and understood.

At category B, there was a definite preference for Urdu with 62.5% favouring it, 20.83% English and 16.66% Kashmiri, as the official language of the state. The reason for choosing Urdu which most respondents penned down was that, it was an easy language often used for communication in all domains.

In category C, there was an overwhelming desire for installing Kashmiri as the official language expressed by 85.71% respondents, only 14.29% wanted English. Quite interestingly, no one opted for Urdu. Kashmiri was the major choice, primarily because of the same reason as given by respondents at category A, that it was the mother tongue. Other reasons included passing the language on to the next generation along with the culture embedded in it. Still others believed that Kashmiri identity was at stake if the language was lost. There was a sentimental feeling towards Kashmiri within the group, a sense of duty towards its revival, and an urge to make it the language of communication within all homes of Srinagar. This finding is very significant, considering that the respondents fluently speak both English and Urdu.

Ironically, though respondents at category C, admitted using English and Urdu to communicate in all domains, yet there was no wavering in the fierce sense of pride they had

in their mother tongue, which came across clearly during this study. This suggested that, though they used other languages, they had no emotional attachment with them. Interestingly, there was no clash between the need of using English for its utilitarian purpose and the need of using Kashmiri in everyday life. The strong sentiment appeared to be in favour of restoring Kashmiri back to its rightful place.

Conclusion

That English occupies a dominant position among the elite classes in Srinagar, is undisputable. However, another reality which emerged during this study was the surprising presence of a strong affinity, for the mother tongue among the English speaking boys and girls of the elite school, where it were least expected since they do not usually converse in Kashmiri. A very interesting reason that came to surface, while talking to them was that, due to their sound economic background, most of them had travelled outside the state and some even outside the country. During these sojourns, there had been moments of realization when they had seen people reverting to their mother tongue while talking to each other, which had set them thinking about their own apathy. This could have left a lasting impression on their minds. A strong sense of Kashmiri identity was present within this sample. They saw Kashmiri language as a repository of Kashmiri culture and tradition and linked Kashmiri Identity with Kashmiri language.

Another opinion is a continuation of Kak's (2002) Kashmiri to Urdu to English path. Here tentatively it can be proposed that the path comes full circle back to Kashmiri. In other words, a typical Kashmiri speaker after mastering Urdu and English in that order seems to come back to Kashmiri. This can be so because once the ultimate prestige is reached, there is no prestige loss in using Kashmiri, and rather this can become a trendy thing to do.

This is an unexpected though a highly significant finding suggestive of a major shift in the mindset of the new generation. Previous studies like Kak (2002) and Ara (2009) had pointed out that Kashmiri scored the lowest as against Urdu and English. In Srinagar, though English is a language of prestige, it is Urdu which is considered to be the language of sweet poetic compositions. Iqbal, Ghalib and Mir are adulated among the literary circles and even the average, not so literary, person of Srinagar is aware of this. Rating Kashmiri as the sweetest, most poetic and prestigious language by the respondents who belong to the socio economic higher group, augurs well for the future of Kashmiri. Kak had sounded a word of caution when he wrote that "that due to Globalization" "... the youth have started viewing Kashmiri as a burden left by their forefathers, which serves no practical utility" (2005). Perhaps, the ominous threat to Kashmiri that looms large seems to have been averted; however, only time will testify to the authenticity of this claim.

References:

- Ara, J. *Needs, Attitude and Motivation Among Kashmiris Learning English- A Linguistic Analysis*. Ph.D dissertation. Kashmir: University of Kashmir, 2009. Print.
- Crystal, D. *Language Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.

Crystal, D. *The English Language: A Guided Tour of the Language*. UK: Penguin, 2002. Print.

Crystal D. *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.

Gandhi, M.K. *MK Gandhi's Hind Swaraj: A Critical Edition*. Annotated, and edited by S. Sharma and T. Suhrud. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010. Print.

Phillipson, R. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: OUP, 1992. Print.

Van Dijk, Teun A. Editorial: The Imperialism of English. *Discourse & Society* 8 (3); 291-2, 1997. Print.

Kak, A. A. *Language maintenance and Language Shift in Srinagar*. Ph.D dissertation. Delhi: University of Delhi, 2002. Print.

Kak, A. A. Globalization of English and its Reflection on Kashmiri. *South Asian Language Review*, 15.1. 2005. Print.

Kachru, B.B. World Englishes: Agony and ecstasy. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 30(2), 133-155. 1996. Print.

Kachru, B.B. *The Dying Linguistic Heritage of the Kashmiris: Kashmiri Literary Culture and Language*, 2002. Print.

Van Dijk, Teun. A. Editorial: The Imperialism of English. *Discourse & Society* July 8 (3), 291-292. 1997. Print.

Mohd Mohsin

During the sixties American academia reviewed its outlook towards the marginalized and deprived writers. Minority and women writers gained significant attention and consequent recognition. Writers from the past who had been ignored started to be unearthed from historical archives and read again in an altogether changed world perspective. Many Native American writers emerged during the second half of the twentieth century who tried to build bridge between their cultural perspectives and the changed perspectives of the dominant white American academia. This emergence of Native American writers was termed as 'Native American renaissance' by the Native American scholar Kenneth Lincoln, a renaissance which was triggered by the winning of Pulitzer Prize by a Kiowa writer, N Scott Momaday for his novel *House Made of Dawn* published in 1968. Momaday was followed by some more writers like Vine Deloria Jr, James Welch and Leslie Marmon Silko. What differentiated these indigenous American writers was the fact that almost all of them wrote with an unalterable loyalty to their indigenous world-views and perspectives in many ways different from and antithetical to the dominant Eurocentric white perspective based primarily upon a Christian world view. Despite the fact that Native American literature was welcomed by readers, many native critics objected to this acceptance and "recognition" of indigenous literatures insisting with Craig Womack who argues in his important book *Red on Red: American Indian Literary Separatism* (1999), that the indigenous literatures were the original literatures of America. These literatures don't need to be canonized; instead, it is the Eurocentric literature that needs to find a proper place in American literature. "We should not allow ourselves, through the definitions we choose and the language we use, to ever assume we are outside the canon; we should not play along and confess to being a second rate literature" (6-7). In this context, the writings of native writers who started to contribute immensely to literature written during the second half of twentieth century can be seen as expressing native sensibilities and worldviews in continuation from the past oral as well as written literatures that had existed before them. Thereby, this continuation serves as a triumph of the indigenous peoples who had to struggle for almost six centuries against the onslaught of the white immigrants who, in the process reduced their numbers immensely. Besides, in the absence of any single religious scripture, the oral literatures that the indigenous peoples propagated served them the essential purpose that is served by religious scriptures to three major Abrahamic religions as well as to some non- Abrahamic religions that too have a scripture as an authority to organize their experiences and give meaning to an otherwise confusing world. It is their sacred outlook which provides the foundation on which Native American culture rests and it is this which informs their literature.

Among the Native American writers that emerged during the sixties, Leslie Marmon Silko is a prominent voice. Being an indigenous writer, Silko acts as a mediator between her

indigenous people and the outside world. The concern to disrupt the psychological complacency of the white Eurocentric (so called) liberalists lies at the heart of Silko's project. In fact, as an epilogue to her novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1992) Silko remarks that her objective was to destroy the belief in linear time that helps the contemporary Eurocentric white American to evade taking responsibility for the crimes from their past and simultaneously helps them to dodge the assertion that speaks about the unconscious presence of the past in the present. She insists:

I *did* want to destroy this idea of 1492. Because people are always saying, 'well, we can't do anything about it. All that happened a long time ago. We weren't the ones that went to Fort Grant and massacred the Apache women and children. That was a long time back.

(Arnold 103)

Silko argues against the claim of many contemporary white Americans who believe that a great deal of change has taken place regarding the indigenous peoples of America. Silko's approach suggests that despite the fact that the Eurocentric America formulated a pseudo religious literature, it cannot escape the Judeo-Christian edifice upon which white thinking is constructed. Her claim is supported by the assumptions of many writers, such as Gregory Erickson, who argue that the epistemological structures that defined the White Eurocentric understanding before the dawn of skepticism continued to work as means of structuring the behavior of the White Eurocentric masses after Modernism and Postmodernism. His book, *The Absence of God in Modernist Literature* (2007), deals exclusively with the intricacies of belief of the contemporary white world in Judeo-Christian God that keeps, for the most part, unconsciously shaping white understanding. He observes:

Modernism anticipates and leads to postmodernism, which in turn uses and reinterprets modernism, and yet both are formed out of conscious and unconscious Judeo-Christian ways of thinking. As readers, writers, and interpreters, both creators and created, we feel trapped in a cycle; we are both contained and containing. (9)

Constructing upon different scholarly arguments, he goes on to further support his claim that although the Judeo-Christian belief in God was challenged through skepticism and doubt, however, at communal as well as socio-political levels the theological significance of God to Eurocentric thinking cannot be questioned (9). In his book *God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse* (2012) Slavok Zizek, a former Yugoslavian philosopher and cultural critic helps the readers understand these assumptions from, what he presumes to be a purely atheistic vantage position. Zizek observes that the need for moral authority is indispensable for the functioning of a society and atheists who celebrate the failure of religion fail to realize its indispensable presence in our societies. Although, Silko has a purely antithetical stance regarding transcendental truths, however, these later developments in western understanding regarding the continuity of the presence of Judeo-Christian values in western societies validate Silko's resistance against the Christian principles, that were formulated discursively by the early immigrants who came to America, that Silko believes had never ceased to exist

in the conscious and the unconscious of the White Americans. This helps Silko to debunk the assertion of many modern day Americans who claim to have changed and shifted to new principles and beliefs regarding their approach to their own identities and the concomitant indigenous identity that gets created in the reformulated white assumptions regarding the "Other". However, what is important is the fact that as long as the Indigenous peoples feel oppressed, the need for resisting remains the central concern in their writings.

Silko published her novel *Ceremony* (1968) and gained immediate fame and recognition in the American literary circles. Owing to her role as a mediator, *Ceremony* was awarded a more or less positive response. Silko used the indigenous myths and sacred cultural narratives in many of her early writings including her novel *Ceremony* thereby opening her sacred cultural legacy to the outside world. However, many Native scholars objected to her innovative use of indigenous sacred narratives in her writings. The problem of presenting the sacred stories to white readers trained in approaching the text through theoretical frameworks that are primarily skeptical in nature troubled these Native scholars. Allen Paula Gunn, a Native American writer and a contemporary of Silko, wrote an article titled "Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Ceremony' in which she criticizes Silko's use of Laguna clan stories in *Ceremony*. Allen asserts:

Ceremony is a novel that I find particularly troublesome, and I tend to non-teach it, if you can picture such a thing. I focus on the story, the plot and action. I read the novel quite differently from how it is read by many. I believe I could no more do (or sanction) the kind of ceremonial investigation of *Ceremony* done by some researchers than I could slit my mother's throat. (87)

Besides Allen, many other scholars state the problem of expressing indigenous sacred stories to non native readers that do not possess attitudes and beliefs to approach the stories from the perspective the stories demand. The pedagogical problem that undermines Allen's project of analysis of *Ceremony's* text is rooted in the shared Native American beliefs which prohibit narrating clan stories outside the clans. Allen remarks:

In the white world, information is to be saved and analyzed at all costs. It is not seen as residing in the minds and molecules of human beings, but as-dare I say it?-transcendent. Civilization and its attendant virtues of freedom and primacy depend on the accessibility of millions of megabytes of data; no matter that the data has lost its meaning by virtue of loss of its human context. Yet traditional materials, sacred or social, have meaning within the traditional, day to day context of the people who live within it. (86)

Allen's objection to Silko's use of sacred clan stories raised an important issue that has attracted the attention of many cultural and cross cultural critics: whether Silko appropriated and misused the indigenous cultural narratives to professionalize a marginalized position by writing within a discourse wherein the central position is held by the Eurocentric hegemony. Besides, it also remains to be seen as to whether the assertion that Leela Gandhi

makes - criticizing a specific brand of postcolonial writers who, in her words, indulge in "professionalisation of the margin" (128) - could include Silko's enterprise of using sacred narratives in her writing. Robert M Nelson, a contemporary Native American scholar defends Silko on the basis that by retelling the clan stories and indigenous myths, Silko defends them from an already existing attempt of appropriation started by white anthropologists like Franz Boas and Elsie Parsons who had approached these narratives by objectifying them as entities from the past. Despite Nelson's defense, the question of failure of transmission of the essence and real meaning of the clan stories outside the tribe remains. Silko herself points to this fact in many of her interviews and critical essays expressing the problems in conveying meanings that were originally transmitted through oral narrations in native settings of "trust" and "belief". Moreover, besides difference based on unshared cultural backgrounds, Silko also acquires an avant-garde status owing to her characteristic storytelling technique. In her book *Storyteller* published in 1981, one becomes conscious of the problems of transmission of meaning through her anecdotes and through the repetitive performances that stress the need for being in the presence of the storyteller which in turn would infuse a sense of community that is deemed necessary by Silko.

However, we get an insightful understanding regarding Silko's use of sacred narratives and concomitant storytelling technique from looking at her political concerns that she discusses in many of her essays and interviews. Right from her childhood, Silko inherited a sense of being oppressed and marginalized in a world dominated by white American perspectives and world views that were antithetical to what she had learnt from the members of her community. In an important incident during her childhood, Silko had to witness a lawsuit wherein the Pueblos of Laguna filed a big lawsuit against the state of New Mexico for six million acres of land the state wrongfully took. Silko remarks that in order to justify their claim on land, "the old folks were going up against the state of New Mexico with only the stories" (18). The Pueblo Indians claim was termed as inauthentic and unreliable and put in contrast to the white authenticity claimed through doctrines of "discovery" making colonial oppression manifest. Experience of studying in a law college had taught Silko the important lesson of confronting the oppressor/ colonizer through terms and language that defies the very parameters of discourse set by the colonizer. With the passage of the time Silko came to realize that "injustice is built in the Anglo-American legal system" and she "decided the only way to seek justice was through the power of stories" (19-20). Addressing White American Eurocentric readers on their own terms would weaken the very claims to sovereignty and self determination that indigenous writers demand. It is in this context that in many of her stories, Silko authorizes the indigenous community as the sole source of authority that remains unquestioned and sacred. Moreover, it is in this context that her short stories contained in her miscellany *Storyteller* (1981) function as authenticated experiences that derive power and meaning within the context of the book. Acting as the moral authority that organizes the indigenous experiences the community serves as the indigenous counterpart to Judeo-Christian social moral codes. Moreover, it is important to remember, as mentioned earlier, that the scholars who reject the dominantly accepted notion of complete

erasure of Judeo-Christian assumptions about life and conduct argue that at the socio-political level Judeo-Christian assumptions still define the dominant Eurocentric perspectives.

Silko published her book *Storyteller* in 1981 incorporating more sacred narratives and beliefs as means of seeing the world and life. It consists of redactions of Pueblo myths and tales, fragments of letters, poems and autobiographical and family history vignettes and twenty six photographs. In *Storyteller* Silko forces the readers to re-evaluate their predefined assumptions not just about the literary and the nonliterary, but also about fact and fiction. The book has been approached as an autobiographical work, as a poetic work, and as a novel. Different interpretations of *Storyteller* tend to see Silko as a postcolonial writer. However, agreeing with Louis Owens insistence of identifying Native writers as resistance writers (24), Silko could easily be identified as a resistance writer who functions within the epistemologies and cosmologies of her Native American tribal understanding. In fact, as argued earlier, Silko attacks the very beliefs upon which the Eurocentric man learns to approach and appropriate the "Other". However, as a mediator she shares many beliefs and fuses Eurocentric literary tradition with her cultural narratives thereby producing literature that defies easy assumptions about meaning. Taking liberties with her indigenous legacies too, she modifies them to suit her form of writing. In fact she insists that change is necessary for the myths to survive and function in the contemporary rapidly changing world. She authenticates her authority of using the sacred material by means of providing evidences that speak of her resilient belief in the indigenous perspective and worldview. In the above context, a brief analysis of two of the short stories from her collection *Storyteller* helps us identify the essence of some the ideas presented in the stories that may otherwise be easily missed by a casual reading of her text.

Placed at the beginning of her book *Storyteller*, the short story of the same name is a story set in arctic Inuit country near Bethel, Alaska. The story tells of three Eskimos living in a shack, an old couple and a girl. Confounded by the white intrusion into their land, the young girl is inquisitive and in search of meanings that would help her to put things in proper perspective. In her inquisition she explores the white American character by developing a relationship with the Gussucks despite warnings of the old man. Towards the end, she tempts the store man, who had been responsible for her parent's death and was never taken to court, to chase her to his death. Despite her apparent innocence, she confesses murder and rejects any other explanation of the store man's death. The Story contains multiple other stories that do not always relate directly to the main story, however as Jaskoski argues these are important for our understanding of the narrative. In fact Silko does speak of the image of a spider web as similar to her Laguna narrative wherein meaning is understood only when looking in totality at the overall structure of the narrative. Until the end is reached, the reader remains ignorant of the true meaning, something that reminds us of the hermeneutic circle wherein our understanding undergoes a repeated modification by the dynamic relation between the part and the whole. Silko's multiple stories embedded in the short story "Storyteller" as well as *Ceremony* demand seeing things in totality after undergrounding a

hermeneutic shift in our perceptions. In fact Silko anticipates and forces us to look at her work from the hermeneutic principle especially in agreement with Gadamer's perspective to interpretation wherein the burden of interpretation lies in the search for truth that the readers can benefit from after an interpretation. Agreeing with Gadamer's critique of historicity wherein he criticizes the view that we can have a purely objective approach to texts separated from us in distance or time, Silko reiterates the necessity of her own interpretative perspectives and contexts to serve as our "good prejudices" (forethoughts) for a proper understanding. As the readers progress in the reading of her works, successive narratives lend modifications of our previous understandings as well as preparing us for anticipating more challenging points of view. In *Storyteller* this principle works to function as a kind of Native American ceremony that eventually changes our perspectives (see also Krumholz 1994). Silko requires this ceremonial transformation in the readers from perspectives that have an unconscious historical lineage to the early immigrant narratives about the natives to perspectives that have a lively link and faith in the omnipresent Indigenous community.

One of the stories contained within "Storyteller" that defies easy interpretation is that of a hunter and a bear. This narrator repeatedly returns to this story that is told by the old man in "Storyteller" and, as Jaskoski suggests, the narrator's repeated reference to this story gives us the impression that it is somehow vital to the main story although the relation isn't evident to the readers (16). Interestingly however, "Storyteller" has a structure similar to *Ceremony* which works on two levels, the mythic and the real world, wherein the recovery of the protagonist, Tayo from post traumatic syndrome is brought about by his undergoing a ceremony that, although working in a modern setting, inhabits the principles of mythic prototypes which are narrated with recurrent intermissions in the text of *Ceremony*. Thereby these intermissions in *Ceremony* make the readers conscious of their importance for a proper approach to the situation at hand. One could look at the bear and the hunter story on similar terms serving as an important guide to explaining the shape that the girl's belief is about to take with the passing of the events. Narrated by the old man, who plays an important role of a storyteller within the narrative something which is also suggested by the respect he receives from the locals, this central story deals with a bear that is pursued by a hunter who despite pursuing it for days fails to hunt it and in the end seems to be falling in the very trap he had set to hunt down the bear. However, the narration suggests that the story emerge as the important source of wisdom for the Yupik girl besides other stories narrated by different members of her community that eventually explain and help her to organize her experiences properly. Despite obscurity, many important comparisons and contrasts help us experience the obvious superiority of the indigenous world views and perspectives to the white understandings. These worldviews are learned in the course of the narrative by the Yupik girl and it is this reintegration into an organic relationship with the community that finally acts as a closure for the Yupik girl instead of concrete facts that could be put in textualized Eurocentric form for the readers who seek to find knowledge. As a contrast the whites in the

story fail to cope with the immediate situation and lacking as they are in an organic relationship with the natural elements. Being materialistic in nature, the whites are shown at a loss with death and failure awaiting their future enterprises. The triumph of the bear over the hunter could also be understood as symbolic of the triumph of the indigenous values and perspectives over the conquering colonial attitudes of the whites. Materialism has become a key characteristic of the dominant White American character. Its roots can easily be traced back to the material quest that tempted the immigrants to come to America in the first place. Despite changes in perspectives, the love for possessing material assets stills continues to dominate the White sensibility resulting in their claim to more indigenous land and colonial projects overseas. However, the Native people believe in living in conformity with the land and life. Accordingly, the girl in the story develops an organic relationship with the land which helps her to impart justice to the store man who had escaped scot free under the protection of the white American legal apparatus. Basing her understanding upon indigenous moral perspectives and attitudes derived from sacred narratives, the girl towards the end confesses murder, once again confounding our moral attitudes for as readers conditioned by Eurocentric discourse of justice; we fail to comprehend alternative interpretations based upon Native culture and indigenous belief. Despite the fact that the girl is innocent of the crime, we are forced to seek other possible reasons for her confession and her insistence upon the fact that she wants to tell the story correctly without lies.

In "Tony's Story" we again confront an alternate perspective towards crime, justice and punishment. However, here the indigenous sacred terminology helps us to grasp the limitations of Eurocentric aesthetics. A white police officer, characterized by an irrational malevolence and unreasonable hatred for the Indians, is the central figure in the story. In one of the incidents, he hits an Indian named Leon without any provocation, almost killing him. In the subsequent narrative, he has two more encounters with Leon and his friend Tony. Tony rationalizes the white police officer's queer behavior and draws a connection between the white cop and the witches through an interpretation of his dream that suggests this connection to him. In a subsequent confrontation when the police officer approaches to assault Leon again, Tony kills him without thinking about the consequences of the act. Compared to him, Leon, an ex-serviceman familiar with the institutions and legal discourse of the western culture, fails to act. With conspicuous political undertones, Tony's apparent eccentric behavior suggests to the readers the tendencies in the sacred mythic interpretations that confound the oppressor to also act as a shield for the resistance to take place which could otherwise be easily confused and debunked through different institutions and discursive arguments. For Tony, it is this mysterious unreasonable sacred characterization of different individuals through native terms that helps him to resist disgrace and oppression, both psychological as well as physical, however, in the context of the story psychological confusion and chaos is foregrounded in the depiction of bewilderment of Leon regarding the policeman. On a similar note, the psychological disturbance and lack of peace expressed in the actions and language of the Gussucks in "Storyteller" is subverted through the resolutions and worldviews embodied by the wisdom acquired by the Yupik girl. Not

relying upon the white legal discourse, the characters act upon their moral sense of right and wrong leading them to act upon their cultural wisdom besides helping them to transmit this wisdom through stories that they tell about their behavior that apparently confounds Eurocentric aesthetics. Stories such as these help the readers to identify the colonial undercurrents that form the substructures of the White oppressive ideologies meant primarily to exploit the land and the people who willingly accept the hegemony. Both the stories remind the readers of Silko's assertion that she made after witnessing the injustice wrought in the very edifice of the Eurocentric approach to justice and truth. The reader is reminded of the textual formulations that helped the European immigrants in the first place to claim the American land by means of the doctrine of "Discovery". Similarly, Silko takes a liberal humanistic view and stops at a certain point before questioning the mythic prototypes that help her characters to derive meaning out of chaotic situations that are created by the actions and perspectives of the whites. As an example, Silko tells us, the indigenous term for the destructive human beings is witches and instead of letting the Eurocentric discourse hijack the terms she reinstates the essence of indigenous terminology for the contemporary situations. Besides Silko, many other Native scholars deny identifying indigenous concepts and ideas with similar ideas and concepts found in the metropolitan centre. It is in this regard that native scholars refuse to identify postmodern labeling upon Native literary endeavours. This assumes prime importance in *Ceremony* where the reference to atom bomb and destruction of environment adds to the significance and importance of Native beliefs which view the earth as sacred. Despite the fact that these ceremonies and beliefs were referred to as superstitions by the colonizing white immigrants, these ceremonies perform their role in curing the indigenous populations who exhibit belief in them. Silko's approach to her sacred narratives is based upon resisting the dominant white discourse historically constructed upon early Christian myths, that served to oppress and colonize the natives. In an attempt to place her indigenous understanding side by side to Christian undercurrents in contemporary white American psyche, Silko reinstates the necessity of her sacred myths and community in contemporary times. Although the purpose of the sacred is to answer confounding questions regarding life and death, Silko's approach is that of using the sacred to resist colonization and oppression. Instead of logical arguments that would help non native readers to imbibe Indigenous sacred beliefs, Silko fails to transmit belief through texts reiterating the importance of being present and close to her storyteller and the community. One has to agree with Allen's criticism that the project of presenting Native American sacred narratives before non native Eurocentric readers is an attempt of appropriation. However, in the context of survival and resistance (Survivance) that the famous Native American scholar, Gerald Vizenor talks about in many of his books and lectures, Silko's use of the sacred as means of resistance is justified.

References:

- Allen, Paula Gunn. "Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*." *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: A Casebook*. Ed. Allan Richard Chavkin. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 83-90. Print.

- Arnold, Ellen L, Ed. *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2000. Print.
- Erickson, Gregory. *The Absence of God in Modernist Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. Print.
- Jaskoski, Helen. *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1998. Print.
- Krumholz, Linda J. "To Understand This World Differently': Reading and Subversion in Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Storyteller'" *Ariel* 25.1 (1994): 89-113. Print.
- Nelson, Robert M. "Rewriting Ethnography: Embedded Texts in Leslie Silko's Ceremony." *Telling the Stories: Essays on American Indian Literatures and Cultures*. By Elizabeth Hoffman Nelson and Malcolm A. Nelson. New York: Peter Lang Pub., 2001. 47-58. Print.
- Owens, Louis. "As If an Indian Were Really an Indian: Native American Voices and Postcolonial Theory." *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. By Gretchen M. Bataille. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2001. 11-24. Print.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Almanac of the Dead: A Novel*. New York: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- . *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997. Print.
- . *Ceremony*. New York: Viking, 1977. Print.
- . *Storyteller*. New York: Arcade Pub., 1981. Print.
- Vizenor, Gerald Robert. *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska, 1999. Print.
- Womack, Craig S. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999. Print.
- Zizek Slavoj, Boris Gunjevic. *God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012. Print.

Depiction of Violence in the Counter-Hegemonic Discourses of Basharat Peer, Mirza Waheed and Shahnaz Bashir

Mudasir Altaf Bhat
Dr. Rabinder Powar

In his famous book *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru views Kashmir as one of his "favoured spots [...] where loveliness dwells and an enchantment steals over the senses" (570). The texts under study here seem to be jesting at the Nehruvian paradisiacal idea of Kashmir, because ever since the Partition, the narrative of Kashmir has been punctuated by violence. It has become a part of daily existence and reality in Kashmir. Violence in Kashmir is never ending, only its form changes, its sway remains maintained. Kashmir is not merely a territorial dispute, but a burning cauldron of violence where the inhabitants can be rightly marked as the 'living dead'. Peace, which is the democratic right of every human being on this earth, appears to a Kashmiri like crying for the moon. Peace seems something piecemeal and is always in the waiting. In short, to be a Kashmiri today means a sense of defeat, a crisis of identity and bewildering uncertainty.

The root cause of this violence is the disputed, unresolved and suspended sovereignty of Kashmir. It is the unfulfilled promise of plebiscite that has left the people of Kashmir with the deeply ingrained feelings of frustration and alienation from the Indian state. India views Kashmir as its integral part and has deployed time and again, coercion, propaganda and deceit to sustain its physical and discursive control over the region. It has maintained a massive state-security apparatus in Kashmir and in order to crush the rebellion and demand of freedom has resorted to militarization, repression and indiscriminate violence, including the denial of democracy, the manipulation of elections and the jailing of rebellious political leaders. In the dominant hegemonic discourses, the situation in Kashmir has been framed as an instance of insurgency. Being a region on the geographical and social margins of the Indian state, the Kashmiri resistance movement has been demonized as a terrorist campaign orchestrated by external forces.

The writers under study therefore respond to the hegemonic discourses that fix the territory of Kashmir as an incontestable part within the geo-political terrain of the Indian nation state and through their narratives form counter-discourses that expose and illuminate the fabricated nature of the Indian colonizing mission in Kashmir. These counter-hegemonic discourses respond to the agents and channels that are used as a tool to control the territory of Kashmir and thereby unfix Kashmir from the Indian imagination. They raise questions about the state sponsored violence by mourning the lives and deaths of those who dare to challenge the Indian occupation of Kashmir. Identifying the valley of Kashmir as a 'state of exception', they focus on the atrocities and violent realities of everyday life and the legal and extra-legal

networks that support them. In doing so, they put forth and add to a perspective that is purely Kashmiri.

Giorgio Agamben defines "state of exception" as "the extension of the military authority's wartime powers into the civil sphere, and a suspension of the constitution, in time the two models end up merging into a single juridical phenomenon that we call the State of Exception" (Agamben, 10). It occurs during a time of emergency when a sovereign authority suspends legal protections to individuals while wielding the violent powers of the state against them. A sovereign is the one "who decides on the state of exception" (1). Agamben says that a state of exception may often manifest in particular spaces like concentration camps and torture centers. But it is not limited to these spaces only, it is all encompassing where every individual is at the risk of being stripped of his or her legal protections and could be taken outside of the law at any moment. It means that state of exception is a necessary component of the state of law and the practice of empire. As Agamben remarks: "Modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. [So] the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones" (2). Within a state of exception, when a person is banned from society and all of his rights are revoked, he becomes a 'homo sacer' or is reduced to 'bare life' in the eyes of the juridical powers. *Homosacer* can be killed by anybody with impunity. Employing the figure of *homo sacer* metaphorically, Agamben argues that the logic of *homo sacer* constitutes the ordering principle of modern states, which operate through the exercise of sovereign power areas designated as 'exceptions' that constitute a particular 'juridical situation' in which inhabitants are stripped of their rights, reduced to 'bare life', and submitted to the sovereign power of the state. Agamben makes a critical point that the state of exception is a necessary component of the state of law and the practice of empire. Sovereign power operates as a few particular agents of the state make the decision to target few particular individuals for the exception, a process that occurs in a few particular places much more frequently than others. Therefore, a crucial task for understanding the state of exception is to identify the agents, the targets, and the spaces where the practice of sovereign power occurs.

In his unforgettable memoir, *Curfewed Night*, Basharat Peer gives an account of the militarization and bunkarization of Kashmir during the early 1990's. He talks about the mushrooming of bunkers and checkpoints in the valley and the brutalization of Kashmir at the hands of Indian army. It can be argued that it is through these checkpoints that Indian nation state asserts its sovereignty over Kashmir. These checkpoints are the fixed and totalizing structures of power in which the person who passes through is stripped of all power and agency. These are the spaces where the body of the subject is exposed to the lawful violence of the state and is stripped to "bare life". As Peer has shown very beautifully that to pass through a checkpoint in Kashmir means "identity check, a possible beating...or to carry

a bag of supplies inside the camp" (Peer, 97). Further the delay and inconvenience that the Indian military checkpoints impose on the daily life of the Kashmiri population is clearly exemplified by the way in which Peer's father's journey from the office to home is severely curtailed. Peer remarks:

It became harder for Father to visit home on weekends. He stopped travelling in his official vehicle, as that made him conspicuous. The journey from his office in Srinagar to our village, once a lovely two-hour ride, had become a risky, life threatening affair. Almost every time he came home, it took him around five hours. On a lucky day, his bus would be stopped only every fifteen minutes, and at each military check post, he and other passengers would be made to stand in queue, holding an identity card and anything else they carried. After a body search, Father would walk half a mile from the check post and wait in another queue for the bus to arrive. On various other days, he barely escaped getting killed. (18)

Peer's account of his father's exposure to lawful violence of the state clearly explains the 'homo-sacer' status of an average Kashmiri and how Kashmir has been transformed into a permanent state of exception.

The permanent nature of state of exception in Kashmir is further validated by acts like PSA (Public Safety Act) and AFSPA (Armed Force's Special Power Act) that give a free hand and unlimited powers to security forces. They end up with acts of violence against the innocent civilians of Kashmir who could be raped, tortured, kidnapped and murdered in custody with impunity. The experience of life in such a state of exception is powerfully evoked by Peer when describing the heart wrenching and blood curdling accounts of violence like the Gawkadal massacre, the molestation of the bride Mubeena and the mass rape of the women of Kunan Poshpora by the Indian army. The whole book is overshadowed by the state violence that can take the form of frisking, crackdowns, check posts, interrogations- all in the name of maintaining law & order and ensuring national interests. The overall narrative can be read as a commentary on the quasi-imperial relationship between India and Kashmir, highlighting the limitations of democratic India that attempts to resolve the question of Kashmir's suspended sovereignty through exceptional violence.

Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* is set in a Gujjar village Nowgam, sandwiched between the belligerences of India and Pakistan, near the Line of Control. The novel describes the securitization of the LOC and the increasingly exceptional measures employed by Indian army to prevent terrorist threats from entering into Indian occupied Kashmir. It can be argued that this securitization of LOC by the Indian troops represents the performance of sovereignty and expands the claim of Indian authority over the territory of Kashmir. As already said, the crucial task for understanding the state of exception is to identify the agents, the targets, and the spaces where the practice of sovereign power occurs. Here in this novel we can clearly identify all these elements. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the LOC and the

adjoining areas like Nowgam are transformed into spaces where the military represents Indian sovereignty targeting the infiltrators crossing LOC and the innocent civilians of Nowgam. Captain Kadian and his fellows represent the agents of exception, the "petty sovereigns" (Butler 56), who make decisions on the life and death of the people of Nowgam. The novel clearly demonstrates that the tactics employed by Kadian and his troops to establish their sovereignty over LOC and its surroundings carve out an exceptional space out of ordinary village. At the end of the story no trace of human beings is left in the village, except the village headman and his seventeen year old son.

The village headman's son is forced by Captain Kadian to become a collaborator, an agent for the Indian army. As there are no options left for him, he complies and is given the task of collecting identity cards, watches, and other personal valuables from the corpses of infiltrators trying to cross the LOC. These corpses are time and again referred by captain Kadian as 'dead meat', 'an elaborate litter', 'debris', 'sneaky bastards' etc during the course of the novel. The narrator recounts his shock and revulsion at the sight he glares at on his first visit to the valley of dead:

Ugly grins, unbelievable, almost inhuman, postures and a grotesque intermingling of broken limbs make me dig my teeth deep, and hard, into my clenched fists....There are bare wounds, holes dark and visceral, and limbless, armless, even headless, torsos. A low moan struggles, screeches inside. Gradually, I approached one of the more intact bodies, gingerly, eyes reduced to hairline slits, and look for a pocket or bag amidst all the dirt and the crushed blood on his clothes. I find the ID card from his back pocket and in some kind of limp involuntary motion throw it into nylon army rucksack the Captain gave me last week.

(Waheed 8)

Thus he becomes a self-declared "official accountant of the dead" (11) employed by "chief accountant of a prosperous bank" (13) of human remains. At an age at which he should be busy in his teenage fantasies, he is busy in documenting corpses and torsos in the putrid trench created by Kadian and his troops. At times he thinks of violating, killing Captain Kadian and following the path of his friends towards *sarhad paar*, but the thought of his parents pacify his feelings and he always stays back. He is afraid that one day he might see the dead bodies of his own friends in the valley of the dead and this thought keeps tearing him apart throughout the novel. It is in the retrospect of this unnamed narrator, that we come to know about the brutalization of his village Nowgam through regular searches, interrogations, crackdowns and deaths until it became an uninhabited wilderness.

During one of the crackdowns in the village, the Governor pays a visit, in order to distribute some prizes and deliver a speech to the people. The Governor is described as barbarous and brutish figure who has been assigned the job of "fixing the Kashmir conflict" (229) by the Center. He is called "the king of curfews" (227). In his speech he justifies and reinforces the hegemonic discourses of the Indian nation state. He begins by describing the

necessity for exceptional security measures that are employed in the village by putting the blame for violence on "external forces, who do not want peace here, who want to destabilize this country (231). Further, he says:

I'm not in favor of curfews, but for the restoration of peace, for the rule of law to prevail....*Dasto*, these forces have just one objective, one motive - to break Kashmir from India, to chop off what everyone now knows and sees as an integral part of India....But they are mistaken, my dear countrymen, they are living in a fool's paradise. They are living a failed dream - how many countries can be carved from India? ... The bond between Kashmir and Mother India is based not just on your king Maharaja Hari Singh's Instrument of Accession and the articles and clauses of India's greatest constitution; it is held together by far more tenacious and lasting forces that neither the convulsions, tribulations and tremors of history, nor the anarchy and cynicism of contemporary politics, can break up. (231-32)

In this speech, the Governor uses the elite nationalist rhetoric of India's secular democracy to justify the use of violence and repression as a technique of political rule. *The Collaborator* thus clearly forms a counter-discourse by showing the hegemonic-discourses as constructed, actively staged and held together by the use of violence and military might. Mirza Waheed presents a counter-narrative to the idea of the Indian nation-state as a pluralist, secular democracy based on the Nehruvian conceptualizations of the nation at Indian independence. *The Collaborator* charts how that vision was lost in Kashmir, as the peripheral territory is caught in the crossfire between India and Pakistan. Waheed exposes here the paradox that the idea of India presents, namely that "its component parts, the states which coalesced into the union, are ancient historical entities, with cultures and independent existences going back many centuries; whereas India itself is a mere thirty-seven years old" (Rushdie 41). This has a significant impact on the relationship between the centre and the peripheral states of the Indian Union as power is located at the centre, not in the individual Indian states. Waheed reassesses India's discourse of democracy and pluralism, questions India's actions on the nation's periphery and implicitly its unity as a constructed postcolonial nation-state.

The text also highlights the gaps in the way in which events and conflicts in Kashmir are orchestrated and staged through popular culture. Captain Kadian brags of his talent to make any corpse look like as a foreign infiltrator, regardless of whether he is a Kashmiri civilian or a foreign militant. The narrator states that he has come to understand step by step how the system of fake encounters actually works. He remarks:

When they need to, they release a list from time to time about a fierce encounter in so-and-so sector on the border that continued for so many hours, went on till the small hours, and so on and so forth. The list of the dead is then sent to the police and the newspapers. The media are never allowed in except for delegations sent by the Centre and the Governor of Kashmir. And when

they want to show off their catch, they film the bodies which have not been conveyed down into the valley, and store the footage for present or future use. That's what we see on TV. Sometimes, especially when they have fake-encountered some poor boys in some far-flung area, they will drag the bodies, after their faces are mutilated, and quickly hand them over to the police or to scared, do-gooder villagers for mass nameless burials; that is, after they are done with camera work etc. (13-14)

By detailing how Captain Kadian renames the corpses by giving them Pakistani names, the narrator spotlights the way in which the Indian army represents the extrajudicial killings of Kashmiri civilians as lawful and legal in terms of AFSPA.

Towards the end of the novel, the narrator attempts to provide a memorial to the persons killed by cremating some of their human remains and laments also for not able to give them a "dignified burial, not even a small prayer, no green coffins and no *fateha*" (303). In doing so, he pays tribute and gives meaning to the precarious lives and deaths of hundreds of unknown dead, unsung, unrecorded martyrs of Kashmir.

The concretization of bunkers and checkpoints in Kashmir symbolize their permanence and the spatial order of Indian sovereignty over the lives and deaths of Kashmiri civilians, but the presence of the parents and wives of the disappeared offer a crucial counterpoint to such sovereign claims. Those who remain behind are haunted endlessly by the possible fates of those who have left them. Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* is one such dark story of a mother's quest to track down her disappeared son - the only reason left in the world to live for. The novel tells the gloomy tale of Haleema and the mysterious disappearance of her son Imran. Just as Waheed uses Captain Kadian to represent the sovereignty of the Indian state at the Indo-Pak LOC in *The Collaborator*, Bashir uses the figure of Major Kushwaha to represent the lawful violence of the state in Kashmir. A figure having unlimited powers to render unilateral decisions, accountable to no law, he becomes the sole reason of Haleema's agony, because it is he who kills her father and later picks up her only son never to send him back.

The novel is set in Natipora, an area located at the outskirts of Srinagar city, some three kilometers away towards the south. The time is turbulent 90's and the valley is roaring with the cries of war. Natipora like the rest of valley has begun to claim its first victims of the war. As Bashir remarks: "The war has begun... young boys had begun sneaking into Pakistan to fetch arms and rebel against the government" (Bashir 23). The insurgency in the valley intensifies followed by curfews, crackdowns, raids, encounters, killings, bunkers, exodus of people, burning markets, schools and buildings. People began dreaming of an independent Kashmir, shouting slogans of *azaadi* in an endless stream of processions.

In such a tumultuous atmosphere, one evening Major Kushwaha and his troops are attacked by two militants in Natipora near Joo's house. The event changes the dynamics of the whole locality and culminates into the tragic, merciless cold blooded murder of Haleema's father G R Joo. The after-effect of the attacks described by the author clearly

show how Kashmiri civilians can be stripped to 'bare life' under the autocratic rule of Indian army:

The next morning, a patrolling party led by a Major Aman Lal Kushwaha began to search the houses. Almost all the men in the neighborhood received their share of beating in turns. The army was still angry over the attack. (47)

And when the turn of G R Joo came, he boldly asserts himself after being blamed by Major Kushwaha that he had given shelter to the militants. He tells Major Kushwaha:

'What is this? You beat everyone. There are civilians in this locality, yet you burn down our shops, you snatch away our living and now you are torturing us. Don't you have any shame?' (49)

G R Joo tried to defend his basic rights but his fate proved to be like any other Kashmiri. He is put to death on the spot.

One fateful night Imran is picked up for no reason by Major Kushwaha and is pushed into oblivion never to return back. He is picked up in place of his namesake Imran Bhat, who had crossed the LOC and was active as the area commander of Natipora for JKLF. Haleema decides to track down her son at any cost. She sells her cattle, her jewelry, her orchard and even her expensive copper utensils to raise some money she might need to free her son. Her search not only unearths the dark secrets of the most brutalized state in the world, but also as she searches varied tracks, she discovers that she isn't the only one who is suffering the agony of missing dear ones. She comes to know that majority of them believe that their missing loved ones have been killed in custody and cremated in mass graves. Many of them have given up hope and have tried to move on. There are others like herself who are obsessively fighting for justice, hoping that their dear ones will return someday. The sudden disappearance of Imran and of thousands of other civilians of Kashmir exemplify the extrajudicial killings in Kashmir that Indian army has always presented as part of a legitimate struggle to protect the security of the Indian nation state from 'non-native enemies of the nation'. By contesting the circumstances of such disappearances, the novel challenges the myth of 'enemy encounters' which are often invoked to justify India's security policies in Kashmir.

Thus all these literary narratives, in their intertextuality and revisionary choices do not subscribe to the imagination of the Indian nation-state. They effectively challenge the normalization of legal and exceptional violence in the valley. Collectively they counter the hegemonic narratives that fix Kashmir as an incontestable part of India. These authors have really voiced the subaltern, the oppressed and have tried to give Kashmir a voice of its own, fearless, unfettered and independent. The following lines clearly reflect the sentiments of every Kashmiri who wish to raise his voice against the ongoing oppression and violence in Kashmir:

Why grieve if to me pen and ink they deny,
I have dipped my fingers in my heart's blood,
What matter if my lips have been sealed, for I,
Have given, to every link of my chains, a tongue.

(Rahman 63)

References:

- Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Trans. Kevin Attel. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.
- Bashir, Shahnaz. *The Half Mother*. Gurgaon: Hachette India, 2014. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life*. New York: Verso, 2004. Print.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. *The Discovery of India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.
- Peer, Basharat. *Curfewed Night*. UP: Random House Publishers, 2009. Print.
- Rahman, Sarwat. *100 Poems by Faiz Ahmad Faiz*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2009. Print.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*. 2nd ed. London: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- Waheed, Mirza. *The Collaborator*. England: Penguin Books, 2012. Print.

Caribbean Consciousness and Diasporic Dilemma: A Study of George Lamming's *The Emigrants*

Deeba Shireen

Edouard Glissant in his book *Caribbean Discourse* (1989), while charting out the course of Caribbean identity remarks: "It all begins naturally with the first African snatched from the Gold Coast. Our new world was the trader's ocean. The land on the other side (our land) thus became for us an intolerable experience. But the traded population became a people on this land" (38). The systematic extermination and decimation of the Caribbean natives was followed by an establishment of plantocracy wherein the slaves brought from across the Atlantic were exploited and dehumanized in the process. By the time most of these Caribbean islands became free, its intellectuals, (in the 1950s) while living in exile grappled with the ontology of a 'West Indian' identity. This experience of colonisation left deep scars on the consciousness of the artists/ intellectuals of the Caribbean. In the present article, I'll be examining the peculiar psychological predicament of the people of West Indies as depicted in George Lamming's *The Emigrants* (1954) and the diasporic experience that exacerbates it.

George Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) identifies exile as a "universal figure" and in the West Indian context, exile can be life bestowing as well as stifling: "When the exile is a man of colonial orientation, and his chosen residence is the country which colonised his own history, then there are certain complications. For each exile has not only got to prove his worth to the other, he has to win the approval of Headquarters, meaning in the case of West Indian writer, England (24). In the tradition of denial and silencing practiced by the colonizer, questions pertaining to politics and definitions of identity are debated by the Caribbean intellectuals. History of the Caribbean, like its language becomes a symbol of enslavement and "a kind of literature without morality" (Walcott 38). A poet's consciousness in such a scenario gets quickened resulting either in a "literature of revenge" or "literature of remorse"; depending on which side of the line one is standing (Walcott: 39). While maintaining a belief in an essential 'Caribbeaness', Stuart Hall suggests that Caribbean identities are framed by two axes -- of similarity and of difference; wherein neither the break from past is absolute nor is an acceptance of a unified present. The question of Caribbean consciousness is made all the more problematic in the hybridized context of the West Indies. Any attempt at cultural and ethnic homogenization is bound to fail in a society where pluralism and creolization are the major cultural models. Citing this early problem faced by theoreticians of Caribbean, J. Michael Dash remarks in his essay "Postcolonial Caribbean identities": "The evolution of Caribbean identity politics is essentially tied to an ideological and imaginative coming to terms with the thorny question of cultural heterogeneity and to problematizing issues like otherness and ambiguities of hybridity" (787).

Following in the footsteps of Edgar Mitcheolzer, many Caribbean artists, being compelled by a lack of readership and opportunities of publication in West Indies carved a niche for themselves in Europe. George Lamming is one such artist-intellectual, who speaks

about the Caribbean consciousness and delineates the diasporic predicament of West Indian people. According to Ian Munro, Lamming "is the most outspoken nationalist of the generation of West Indian novelists who grew to maturity in the turbulent 1930s and 1940s" (126). While his exile in England, Lamming felt the "need to define himself not only as an artist but as a West Indian." (Munro 127)

Lamming's second novel *The Emigrants* (1954) picks up the thread from where he left off in his earlier novel *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953). Narrated by an omniscient narrator, it follows the journey of a group of people who emigrate from the Caribbean to Great Britain in search of a "better break" and to "prove somethin". The emigrants leave for their journey on the eve of Good Friday symbolically informing the readers of the excruciatingly painful nature of their journey—"The deck was an intimate exposure of lives arranging their death" (*The Emigrants* 73). There is almost an incantatory repetition of the phrase that the emigrants were "waiting for something to happen" (5, 6, 10, 11, and 12). The stasis of their West Indian lives is replaced by nothing better. They are bitterly disillusioned by their 'mother country' where they encounter stereotyping, homogenization, suspicion and prejudice.

The Caribbean pre-eminently presents a case of modern diaspora in a context where there is a "lack of visible, evolving continuity between the inhabitants and the culture of origin" (King 7). Derek Walcott in his essay "Thinking the Diaspora: Home-thoughts from Abroad", remarks that "Caribbean culture is essentially driven by a diasporic aesthetic" (549). For him the question of diaspora is important in revealing "the complexities, not simply of building, but of imagining Caribbean nationhood and identity, in an era of intensifying globalization" (543). Caribbean peoples do not fit into the neat framework of the 'classical diaspora' (like the Jewish diaspora) wherein one traumatic event in history shapes their trajectory. Caribbean diaspora as per Robin Cohen form a case of 'deterritorialized diaspora'. Caribbean becomes a point of departure for its already displaced population which in turn leads to displacement two or many times over. Robin Cohen in his book *Global Diasporas* (2008) calls migration that took place in the 1950s as 'panic migration' which happened in view of the imminent implementation of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act that would check the unregulated flow of Caribbean peoples in the UK. The migrants are thus described:

Despite finding unskilled jobs, the early experiences of Caribbean people in the UK were often negative ones. They felt that their wartime loyalty had been unacknowledged and that they were treated as an unwelcome problem rather than as valued citizens of the empire coming to help the motherland. Besides this psychic shock of rejection, at a more practical level occupational mobility was limited, educational successes were meagre and the second generation showed high rates of crime and unemployment.

(Cohen 127)

Tornado is one such character in *The Emigrants* who has served in the RAF under the British Commonwealth Air Training plan of December 1939. During the course of their journey, the ruptures within the islanders become evident by altercations amongst them. However, the

rhetoric of a unified West Indian identity maintained by Tornado saves the day. As opposed to him, the Jamaican stands for individualism. Tornado, who had formerly held the attention of people on board before the Jamaican spoke, is impressed by his pragmatic and skeptical view. Yet, he exhibits a confused perspective as he tries to merge the idea of individualism and nationalism:

... he [Tornado] felt for a moment that he believed what the Jamaican had said. He didn't want to say things that would contradict what he had heard. Each, he said, must fend for himself, but he meant also that each must fend for himself in the same group.

(*The Emigrants* 76-77)

The Jamaicans views the hybrid nature of Caribbean people as a "sort of vomit"; neither one thing nor the other and this dilemma pushes them against the wall. They cry hoarse their identity (rather the lack of it); as the Jamaican remarks: "Me look into hist'ry a little an' say to myself, when a man start callin' his name all the time, for all an' sundry to know, watch out, him ain't sure w'at his name is" (*The Emigrants* 65). Because of the lack of a stable identity, West Indians are gripped by an obsessive urge to prove their worth:

When other people say that them is neither one thing nor the other, but just different from every other complete thing, them get frightened, sometimes shamed, till them get together an' make up they minds that them goin' prove what them is. Them all provin' something . . . provin' a name. A good name. Them is West Indians. Not Jamaicans or Trinidadians. Cause the bigger the better. Them is West Indians. . . An' is the reason West Indies may out o' dat vomit produce a great people, 'cause them provin' that them want to be something.

(*The Emigrants* 66)

This crisis of identity gets heightened in the characters when they reach England and undergo a bitter disillusionment. One of the most ambitious persons of all the characters - Higgins who nurtured the dream of being a cook in England turns into a paranoid, on being wrongly accused of being a drug peddler. The most curious case is of Collis, who is a writer and betrays his own profession when he comes to England for a "better break". The Yugoslav who meets him in the ship serves as his alter ego in trying to remind him of his mission: "You're a public victim. You are articulate not only for yourself, but thousands who'll never see you in person, but who will know you because the printed page is public property. And if you betray yourself, you can betray thousands too. . ." (*The Emigrants* 101). Lamming remarks in his essay "The Occasion of Speaking" that the "West Indian education's was imported in much the same way that flour and butter are imported from Canada" (27). In such a scenario, the role of a writer to retrieve history and to re-write the wrongs of colonialism cannot be overemphasized. Collis shirks his duty and degenerates into a drunkard, subject to a perpetual tortuous gaze of the master—"I see the faces without their attributes . . . My relation then is that of a subject to an object . . . I see the body as an object . . ." He asks Dickson, "Have you ever felt that you were ever *seen* this way?" (*The Emigrants* 275)

Caribbean consciousness is determined as much as by the gaze of the coloniser as by the language that they speak: "The borrowed, non-standard, yet paradoxically native English of the West Indies has acted as a reminder to its speakers both of their marginality relative to the metropolis, and their alienation from their cultural roots." (Boehmer 198). The use of English by Dickson, in the novel, reveals his fractured sensibility with his fastidious, almost stubborn application of grammatical rules in his discourse. So much so, the narrator comments about him: "It was as though you had taken a willing London Cockney and put him in some cultural laboratory" (*The Emigrants* 57). About Mrs. Redhead, the narrator reveals that "Whenever she was angry or anxious, she slipped unconsciously into dialect" (*The Emigrants* 201-202). The meeting between Collis and Pearson provides a sad commentary on how flimsy and fragile are the relations between the coloniser and the colonised; even if the former assumes a patronizing attitude: "No word was spoken; but there seemed to be an understanding that this evening had been an ordeal which was drawing close" (*The Emigrants* 148). Pearson is unable to see beyond his (Collis') colour. Yet for all his silent rage, Collis must assume what Lamming calls 'the camouflage of self evaporation'. Therefore, the consciousness of the Caribbean peoples is marked by their objectification, displacement and dehumanization at the hands of the colonizer. As succinctly put by Aime Césaire, colonization equals "thingification." (62)

References:

- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. 2nd ed. New York: OUP, 2005. Print.
- Césaire, Aime. "From *Discourse on Colonialism*." *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Desai Gaurav, and Supriya Nair. Berg, 2005. Print.
- Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. London and NY: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Dash, J. Michael. "Postcolonial Caribbean identities." *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*. eds. Irele F. Abiola, and Simon Gikandi. Vol. 2. Cambridge: CUP, 2004. Print.
- Glissant, Edouard. *Caribbean Discourse*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989. Print.
- King, Bruce. *West Indian Literature*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1979. Print.
- Munro, Ian. "George Lamming." King 126-143. Print.
- Lamming, George. *The Emigrants*. USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1954. Print.

--- *The Pleasures of Exile*. USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1960. Print.

Walcott, Derek. "Thinking the Diaspora: Home-thoughts from Abroad." *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Desai Gaurav, and Supriya Nair. Berg, 2005. Print.

--- "The Muse of History". *Critics on Caribbean Literature: Readings in Literary Criticism*. ed. Baugh, Edward. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978. Print.

Soyinka is one of the influential men of the African world of letters, among whom we may include fellow Nigerian giant Chinua Achebe, the Senegalese poet President Leopold Senghor and Kenyan activist Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Soyinka occupies a unique position particularly among the duo Nigerian writers—Chinua Achebe and John Pepper Clark. Unlike the latter, Achebe and Clark who have excelled in particular genres, Achebe in fiction and Clark in drama, respectively—Soyinka has demonstrated a consummate mastery over almost every literary genre proving his amazing versatility. As Jeyifo argues, "It is impossible to compartmentalize his different writings because of their strong overlap" (19). The incorporation of unfamiliar anthropological material, fictionalization of nationalist and political aspirations and the recent trend of treating social and existential problems in artistic terms have lent a complex character to African writing and Soyinka's works being very representative share many of the concerns of the African writers.

Soyinka's harrowing experiences with the oppressive forces after the Nigerian Independence made him a kind of a revolutionary. In October 1969, when the civil war came to an end, amnesty was proclaimed, and Soyinka was released from prison. For the first few months after his release, Soyinka stayed at a friend's farm in southern France where he sought solitude after a period of mental stagnation. From this experience emerged *The Bacchae of Euripides*, a reworking of the Pentheus myth. K E Senanu appreciates the play by asserting:

The Bacchae which Euripides (480–406 BC) wrote towards the end of his life, while he was in self-exile in Macedon, has always been recognized for his astonishing power, for classical simplicity and rigor of its structure and for the remarkable nature of its homage to traditional beliefs from a man who has spent the greater part of his writing career expressing his scepticism.

(Rajeshwar 108)

Femi Osofisan and Athol Fugard are some African playwrights who, like Soyinka, have adapted the classical texts culminating in the expansion and interrogation of the postcolonial theatre. To regard postcolonial African performance as part of a wider literary performance, history exposes playwrights, performers and directors, and the texts to new forms of inquiry. Postcolonial adaptations and re-readings of Greek classics reveal signifying performance practices, and raise political and ideological questions. A study of these adaptations not only raises questions of literary and performance aesthetics and cultural signification but also, "opens up new ways of seeing, and understanding" (Mercer 2) for the critic and the performer.

The Bacchae... adapted by Soyinka is an ancient Greek tragedy by the Athenian playwright, Euripides, written during his final years in Macedon, at the court of Archelaus I of Macedon. Euripides's *Bacchae* premiered posthumously at the Theatre of Dionysus in

405 BC as part of a tetralogy that also included *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and which Euripides's son or nephew probably directed. It won the first prize in the City of Dionysia's festival competition. The tragedy is based on the mythological story of King Pentheus of Thebes and his mother Agave, and their punishment by the god Dionysus (who is Pentheus's cousin) for refusing to worship him.

Wole Soyinka adapted the play as *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* at the British Royal National Theatre in London in 1972, incorporating a second chorus of slaves to mirror the civil unrest in his native Nigeria. Soyinka's title, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, suggests the influence of ancient Greek drama in his playwriting. Robert Detweiler and David Jasper also suggest the paramount influence of the Greek playwright, Euripides in Soyinka's *The Bacchae* by saying, "In the early 1970s, he adapted Euripides's play, *The Bacchae* while using Euripides's version as a guide, Soyinka essentially rewrites the Greek play..." (63). Other dramatists view this play as a bridge between the African and European traditions. But Soyinka also subverts the dominance of the European tradition in postcolonial Africa with the note of mimicry in this title: his play is obviously not *The Bacchae of Euripides*. Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillespie in *Classics in Post-colonial Worlds* (2007) delineate how Soyinka, while retaining aspects of Euripides's play, embeds certain cross-cultural elements whose ingredients are essentially African.

Okpewho makes a very powerful argument about Soyinka's parochializing strategies or counter-hegemonic moves that centre his adaptation in Yoruba culture and politics (38). These are readily seen in the charnel house image of skeletal remains reminiscent of the gladiatorial spectacle of mass executions that took place on Bar Beach in the aftermath of the Biafran civil war. They are also prevalent in the attitudes of both rulers, Pentheus and Kadmos, who could be echoing the sentiments of Nigeria's military leaders from whom Soyinka had fled:

Pentheus: I shall have order! Let the city know at once Pentheus is here to give back order and sanity. To think those reports which came to us abroad are true! Not padded or stained. Disgustingly true in detail. If anything reality beggars the report. It's disgusting!...Let everyone know I've returned to impose order. Order!

(*The Bacchae...* 256)

Pentheus, as a dictator, is revealed further in the following dialogue:

PENTHEUS: Go, this instant!
Find the place where this prophet sits. Faking revelations out of birdsong. Go. Pry it up with crowbars, heave it over. Upside down. Demolish everything you see. Throw his fillets out to wind and weather. That will teach you! The rest of you, Go Scour the city, bring me this foreigner... He 'll find Thebes a harder bed than he had Bargained for with his bacchic jigs.

(*The Bacchae...* 263)

The hegemonic element in Kadmos is delineated in the following dialogue:

KADMOS: I am still Kadmos, I sowed the dragon's teeth. And brought forth a race of supermen. ...

(*The Bacchae*... 264)

Soyinka's syncretism is grounded in a challenge to the dictatorial excesses of the government in his homeland as well as to the hegemonic position of the British Academy of Nigeria. Certainly, the playwright's substitution of Ogun for Dionysos is more than a personal choice; it serves as a corrective for —what he sees as an error in Euripides's portrait of chthonic essence (Okpewho 52), and thus becomes a way to resist the colonial insistence upon cultural superiority that was blended well in the university education offered to Soyinka and his contemporaries at Ibadan and Ife before independence.

The nostalgia of the past communal self always haunts postcolonial cultures and they loathe its unnatural return in a more specific way. The postcolonial identity is often found wriggling between the postmodern temptations of global capitalism, the modernist thrust of national identities, and the premodern heritage of obsolete tribal communities. This postcolonial betweenness has been explored by Soyinka through his revision of violence in ancient Greek drama. In *The Bacchae*..., Soyinka returns to the roots of both European and African (Yoruba) theatre, combining Dionysian and Ogunian rites of communal passage, to involve a postmodern and postcolonial audience in the ancient sacrificial offering. Okpewho argues, "Soyinka's adaptation of Euripides's play is a translation of culture, and that he devotes as much of his energy to reconstruct the ethnos of the play as to manipulating the language of it" (32). Okpewho offers an important way of reading postcolonial adaptations of the classics. Soyinka's *The Bacchae*... is an exemplary postcolonial adaptation of the classic and the elements of Yoruba ritual theatre in it are noteworthy. Soyinka relates the historical loss of the earth gods grounding ritual drama, in premodern Europe and modern Africa, not only to theological colonialism, but also to a profound transformation that has taken place within the human psyche.

Soyinka's play contains diversified views which are not only debatable but commendable as well. He seems to drop the hint through his writing that Greeks failed to pay reverence to other cultures. But the other cultures or say foreign subjects were the elements responsible for harnessing the revolution and outwit people like Pentheus. The challenging job for Soyinka was to decolonise the European stage through his postcolonial adaptation of a classic. Soyinka's play reflects the notion of Africaness specifically through the performative styles that he employs. He is quite successful in retaining the notion of Africaness in his adapted play through the multiple performances. When Soyinka's African performance is displayed and disrupted by new cultures, the meeting of different cultures culminates in the production of a new space where questions of originality, myth and meaning of Africaness arise. Since, the text is embedded with the elements of postcolonial performance through its relationship to slavery and empire which makes us to reflect on our position in post-imperial world. Homi K Bhabha's idea of "the third space" is useful:

The Third space, in Bhabha's usage, is a third location, outside, or in-between, traditional binary structures of cultural analysis. The Third space is an attempt to assign spatial characteristics to its margins...

(Hernandez 11)

In order to claim the "Third space", the stage becomes the space that allows the user/performer to subvert the authorized images and create his counter discourse. In the analysis of postcolonial world, Soyinka identifies the multiple spaces that he engages in his writing as: the world of living, the world of the dead and so on:

LEADER: Justice! Restitution! O Spirit of Equity
Be manifest! Bright clear sword, a gleam
Of blood on its edge—drive!
Destroy the earth-spurning evil spawn of Ichion.
IST BACCHANTE: Reveal yourself Dionysos! Be
manifest!
O Bacchus come! Come with your killing smile!...
OFFICER: What is this? Has this god not done enough
That you still call here on Bromius?...
OFFICER: I am only a soldier, nothing more, yet
I mourn the fortunes of this fallen house.
King Pentheus, son of Ichion is dead.

(*The Baccha* 296-297)

Therefore, Soyinka fills in the "Third space" with the notion of Africaness which is represented by the Old Slave:

OLD SLAVE: What does it mean life? Dare one
Hope for better than merely warring, seeking
Change, seeking the better life? Can we
Control what threatens before the eruption?
Defeat what oppresses by anticipation? Can we?
Dare we surrender to what comes after, embrace
The ambiguous face of the future? It is enough
To concede awareness of the inexplicable, to wait
And watch the unfolding. . . .

(*The Bacchae*... 292)

These interpretations of multiple spaces are important to our understanding of how Soyinka identifies the notion of space of transition represented by the characters. The space is filled with the notion of Africaness—culture and history. The stage provides a kind of platform to Soyinka where he subverts the authorized images and turns them against themselves to reveal a different history.

Soyinka's perspective from the postcolonial world enables a critical interrogation of colonization and slave trade beyond Africa to Asia. The Slave Leader is an interesting character who, obsessed by memories of his homeland, the landscape, believes in Dionysus as a Messiah, and dreams of a life after slavery.

LEADER: [progressively radiant]: He...is...
Sweet upon the mountains, such sweetness
As afterbirth, such sweetness as death.
His hand strap wildness, and breed it gentle
He infuses tameness with savagery...
In the mountains of Eritrea, in the deserts of Libya
In phrygia whose copper hills ring with cries of
Bromius, Zagreus, Dionysos,
I know he is the awaited, the covenant, promise,
Restorer of fullness to Nature's lean hours...
Oh let his flames burn gently in you, gently,
Or else—consume you it must—consume you...

(*The Baccha* 249-250)

The imperial master's desire to control and conquer the other is embedded in Pentheus whose name in Greek signifies sorrow. His appearance, costumes and props highlight his obsession with power; before Dionysos dresses him in a toga, he is in military regalia complete with a sword. The sword and his militaristic vocal projections echo his desire to order, control and oppress others. His imagination is to control the immortal world but, Tiresias warns him about his journey towards death (*The Bacchae*... 259). The violent assault of the Old Slave, who beseeches him not to destroy Dionysos's hut, is a visible extension of his violent streak that gives the Slave Leader the opportunity to confront the colonial regime. Pentheus is an imperial master whose character is constructed to mirror contemporary dictators like the deceased Mobutu Ssesseko (Zaire), Idi Amin Dada (Uganda) and Emperor Bokassa (Central African Republic) whom Soyinka refers to in the play. In addition, through the Old Slave, Soyinka is able to comment on the ritual of regeneration, as a universal concept for, he argues, it covered the entire spectrum of socio-economic consciousness as well as the religious experience of the people and is as relevant to Africa today as it was to Euripides' Greece.

Soyinka's analysis of tyranny and interrogation of the Greek imperial codes may read as anti-classical by some people, while for others it is an exercise in re-presenting the classical Greek text. Soyinka uses the classical form as a foundation to explore critical issues where by he focuses on filling in the gaps. He engages with its structure, style and conventions, interpreting and redeveloping/ redefining the classical to enable it to migrate to new spaces. By creating this dialogical relationship between African and Greek dramatic forms, rooted through an African slave narrative, he redefines it for an African postcolonial perspective. Hence, this allows us to ask ideological questions about how it has been read and performed. For example, the slave community, comprising of African and oriental slave

women, form into a formidable oppositional force led by the Slave Leader. What Soyinka achieves in the scene where the Old Slave is slapped is emblematic of the play's central theme specifically because the Slave Leader sees the possibility of liberation:

PENTHEUS [his hand on his sword]:
Do you slaves defy me?
VARIOUS: We are strangers but we know the meaning of
madness
To hit an Old servant
With frost on his head
Such as one as has stood
At the gateway of Mysteries.
LEADER: You know it. This
Was the body of the Old Year Dying
The choice of the priests of Eleusis
Till good Tiresias stepped in his place.
SLAVE: And now you'll pull down the Old Seer's hut...
LEADER: No one will touch him where he lies
The world must see it.
Dionysos must avenge his profanity.
I live to share
The feast of the vengeance of joy. O-oh

(*The Bacchae* 264)

The main element that entirely gives a different form to Soyinka's performance of an ancient drama is his new perception of tragedy. Being a postcolonial victim, he completely negates the Eurocentric definition of tragedy. Instead, Soyinka finds the Greek myth of Dionysus to be a significant parallel, rather than the canonical origin (Goff and Simpson 74). He comes up with his innovative views regarding Eurocentric definition of tragedy in an interview with Anthony Kwame Appiah. He expresses the different ways in which different communities relate to the concept of tragedy. Soyinka asserts that it is not easy to stage a tragedy for an American audience because the real concept of tragedy is distant to many people. He states:

I remember my shock as a student of literature and drama when I read that drama originated in Greece. What is this? I couldn't quite deal with it. What are they talking about? I never heard my grandfather talk about Greeks invading Yoruba land. I couldn't understand. I've lived from childhood with drama. I read at the time that tragedy evolved as a result of the rites of Dionysus. Now we all went through this damn thing, so I think the presence [sic] of eradication had better begin. It doesn't matter what form it takes.

(777-785)

There can be possibly two reasons for Soyinka's negation of Euro-centric definition of tragedy: one is to show that literature is not the monopoly of colonizer and the other is to give a voice to oppression by twisting the tragic tale to suit his end. Therefore, Soyinka dismisses out of hand the notion that tragedy is in some way necessarily connected to European identity. Soyinka explains that all communities have experiences of tragedy but it is only in

the details the differences arise. In "The Fourth Stage" Soyinka relates Yoruba tradition and European antiquity. He states:

In Asian and European antiquity, therefore, man did, like, the African, exist within a cosmic totality, did possess a consciousness in which his own earth being, his gravity-bound apprehension of self was inseparable from the entire cosmic phenomenon. (3)

Soyinka states that ancient Europeans lost the chthonic connection in ancient European theatre and by extension a sense of the cosmic totality as a result of the expansion of the Platonic-Christian tradition. But Yoruba (African) tragedy is still able to move into the chthonic realm. He equates Dionysos to Ogun arguing that although Ogun is, "a totality of the Dionysian, Apollonian and Promethean virtues" (141), he is the elder brother to Dionysos. The presence of both Ogun and Dionysos in Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*, is a testimony to the fact that Soyinka creates a marvelous tragedy by foregrounding Ancient Greek drama with African rituals and gods.

Soyinka's adaptation of *Bacchae* is aimed to set the theatre free from the clutches of colonization. The breaking of shackles is carried by innovative dramatic techniques. At the same time, the locale of the play is changed apparently; when observed minutely, Ancient or say colonial Greece is still there. But he does change the classic text as he does not narrate the story in the same old way as he uses myth, dialogue and iconography drawn from Africa and Europe. Just as Euripides's play examined ancient Greece, Soyinka's revision excavates Africa, Europe, America and Asia in post-imperial age. Also, one cannot deny that the indirect presence of Europe is felt strongly in the play, in the guise of Greece. Soyinka is criticized by critics who sought to present African literary works without the presence of Europe. But it is worth appreciation that Soyinka has retained European influence in the play; by doing this he has proved his mettle as an artist by setting all literary artists free to use the myriad techniques and styles that are consistent with the culture and heritage of Nigeria and convey contemporary reality well. Soyinka's revision of this drama connects a modern Nigerian in exile to his European audiences. The link between Greek theatre and older African gods in the play stresses on the importance of rituals in both the Euro-American and African theatre in the postcolonial age.

References:

Deitweiler, Robert and David Jasper. *Religion and Literature: A Reader by Robert Detweiler and David Jasper*. John Knox Press: USA, 2000. Print.

Goff, Barbara and Simpson, Michael. *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone and the Dramas of the African Diaspora*. Oxford: OUP, 2008. Print.

Hardwick, Lorna and Carol Gillispie. *Classics in post-colonial Worlds: Classical Presence*. Oxford: OUP, 2007. Print.

Jeyifo, Biodun. *Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism*. Cambridge: CUP, 2004. Print.

Mercer, Kobena. *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Okwepho, Apha. "Soyinka, Euripides and the Anxiety of Empire." *Research in African Literature*. Oxford: OUP, 1999. Print.

Olaniyan, Tejumola and Ato Quayson. "The Fourth Stage: Ogun/ Origin of Yoruba Tragedy." *Critical Perspectives on African Literature*, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Print.

Rajeshwar, M. *Soyinka*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1990. Print.

Soyinka, Wole. *The Bacchae of Euripides*. Oxford: OUP, 1973. Print.

Basharat Shameem

The armed conflict in Kashmir appears unrelenting, having already taken a heavy toll on human life. The magnitude of the suffering brought about by the conflict is unprecedented. The discourse on Kashmir, and its protracted conflict, has stirred up an entire spectrum of writing—both literary and non-literary. These writings, pertaining to various contending discourses, come up with their own subjective perspectives regarding Kashmir in terms of experience and reality. Written from hegemonic positions, these writings indulge in rhetoric and a monolithic representation of the reality which often results in the falsification of many significant aspects of the lived experience. However, recently, we are witnessing the emergence of many indigenous voices which endeavour to reflect the multifaceted shades of the experience of the conflict in Kashmir. These voices aim to counter the rhetorical mania of the dominant narratives by bringing to fore fresh perspectives borne out of the lived experiences of the conflict, and hence offer a complete discontinuity from the previous narratives about Kashmir. One such emerging writer from Kashmir is Shahnaz Bashir. This paper tries to argue how Shahnaz Bashir's novel *The Half Mother* offers a fresh perspective on the reality of the conflict in Kashmir through literary imagination by attempting to highlight the predicament of Kashmiris who have lived under the debilitating shadows of military oppression. The focus is clearly on the adverse impact of the conflict on Kashmiri women who have endured a tough existence under the military oppression. It is an aspect of the conflict which has been neglected by the world.

The novel is set in the Kashmir of 1990s when the region witnessed an armed uprising against the Indian rule. It was the commencement of a violent phase in Kashmir's history. Strikes and protests became frequent. Muslim youth in large numbers crossed the border with Pakistan (LOC) for armed training. The demand for *Azaadi* or freedom reverberated across valley and the Muslim-majority regions of Jammu province. Different militant groups came into the existence with their deadly attacks against the Indian establishment. The response of the Indian government to the armed struggle of Kashmiris was terribly repressive. As the militant activity increased in the early 1990s, the Indian government infused thousands of military personnel into Kashmir to quell the armed uprising. These military personnel were given complete authority with the enactment of such laws as Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). Such laws gave complete legal immunity to the soldiers. The result was a spate of fake encounters, rapes, curfews, torture, detentions, enforced disappearances, and killings, all of which exacerbated the atrocious circumstances in Kashmir further. Just as Shahnaz Bashir describes in the novel:

The year 1990. As the insurgency in the valley intensified, the government resigned, paving the way for governor's rule. Tears, blood, death and war followed, as did curfews, crackdowns, raids, encounters, killings, bunkers, an exodus of people, burning markets, schools and buildings. Shafiq's sons,

Shaheen Bhat (an exceptional student of science and math) and Imran Bhat (budding footballer) are the first two boys in Natipora to cross the border to Pakistan. Her daughter Rukhsana became the first woman in Natipora to be beaten and stripped naked in front of her captured parents by the troops. Shabeer Ahmad was the first in Natipora who was killed by the army by pumping 23 bullets into his body after he refused to remove a Pakistani flag off a telegraph pole. Farmer Ramzaan Dar's ripe paddy was set on fire when he refused to hand over his son Riyaz to the army. Hundreds of thousands began to march on every street and road in an endless stream of processions. Men, women, children, old, young—all. Their green headbands, the banners they brandished, the flags they waved, the placards they held, the slogans they shouted and painted on the walls repeated the same word over and over: *Azaadi*. (32)

The renowned poet from Kashmir, Agha Shahid Ali, describes the calamity of the times in the following words in his prose poem, "Karbala: A History of the House of Sorrow":

Summer 1992 — when for two years Death had turned

Every day in Kashmir into some family's Karbala.

(Quoted in Zaidi)

Sumantra Bose notes about the Kashmir of 1990s, "During suspension of civil liberties, institution of martial law, widespread police killings, brutalization, and the automatic equation of Kashmiris with 'terrorists', Kashmir was now a society under daily siege" (4). This is the immediate historical backdrop against which the novel is set as it aims to explore these realities by reflecting the perspectives of the people who are in the midst of oppression.

Among other tragic realities of oppression, the novel brings to centre stage a recurring case in Kashmir during the 1990s - issue of enforced disappearances. The tale of Haleema's teenage son Imran, who is arrested by the Indian army and then subjected to an enforced disappearance, forms the locus of the narrative. There are no charges against Imran; he is just a bright teenager who had got nothing to do with militancy. Yet, he is picked up because the military wants exercise all kinds of brutalities on the dissenting Kashmiris. This scene is repeated all over Kashmir as the authoritarian Indian state, represented by its powerful military, pitted itself against the common Kashmiris. In the novel, this state brutality is symbolized by Major Aman Kushwaha. He wants to let Kashmiris "see what happens when" they dare to "rebel against India" (Bashir 50).

Imran is not the only victim of the 'enforced disappearance'; there are many other Kashmiris who have met the same fate at the hands of the military oppressors which has resulted in thousands of 'half widows' as they are called in Kashmir or, 'half mothers' as the title suggests. This dreadful reality is revealed by the creation of Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) in Kashmir which estimates the number of enforced disappearances in Kashmir between 1989 and 2009 to be between 8,000 to 10,000 people.

The women in the novel, largely symbolized by its main character Haleema, indisputably appear as suffering beings. In any state of conflict, children and women are always the worst victims because of their vulnerable positions in the society. Chandra Talpade Mohanty comments on the predicament of women caught in the midst of various forms of turmoil: "Women have never been secure within (or without) the nation state—they are always disproportionately affected by war, forced migration, famine, and other forms of social, political, and economic turmoil" (514). In conflict zones such as Kashmir, it has been repeatedly found that violence on the bodies of women, in the form of rape or other forms of sexual assault, serves as a mechanism of political suppression. In this context, Binalakshmi Nepram states, "Rape, or other types of physical assault in conflict or under a repressive regime, is neither incidental nor private; it routinely serves a strategic function and acts as a tool for achieving specific military or political objectives" (8). Such acts of bodily duress are underscored by an idea of keeping a woman in complete confinement and submission. As illustrated by the lives of Haleema and other women in *The Half Mother*, women are put under extreme emotional pressure by detaining or killing their nearest relatives. Human Rights Watch investigations and other studies in Kashmir and other conflict zones have revealed that rape and sexual assault of women are integral parts of these conflicts. Since most cultures value women's sexual purity and honour, the oppressive forces attempt to violate that purity and honour in order to wound the whole community. Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles argue, "gender relations and identities are first deployed in sites of militarized conflict to incite, exacerbate, and fuel violence" (4). Since gender is central to the construction of national, ethnic and religious identities, women's behaviour is perceived as a "cultural marker" of "their" communities (4). The existence of draconian laws in Kashmir like AFSPA, which give complete impunity to soldiers, openly authorizes sexual assault and molestation of women and suppresses their fundamental right to life of dignity and safety. In this context, scholar and rights-activist, Hamida Bano, argues:

Instead of augmenting the dignity and ensuring safety and security of women, the [Indian forces] have acted as the predators of their individual integrity and invaders of their private spaces. Since patriarchy is inbuilt within the Indian nationhood, they have carried sexual assaults on women's bodies to inflict symbolic defeat on the entire community in Kashmir. The Patriarchal Indian society considers women as repositories of communal honour, by violating their bodies, the state forces have tried to humiliate and politically subjugate the 'ethnic other' in Kashmir. That is what I mean by objectification of women, reducing them to the status of abject objects who have been used for achieving nefarious political designs by the state.

(Greater Kashmir)

In Kashmir, rapes and molestations by Indian security forces mostly happen during crackdowns, cordon-and-search operations, during which men are held for identification in open fields away from the residential localities. In one such crackdown in the novel, Rukhsana, a militant's sister is beaten and stripped naked before the eyes of her parents. Her mother, Shafiqa, is also cruelly beaten. She is also threatened that if her sons don't surrender, Rukhsana will be kidnapped. Using women deliberately as soft targets enables the oppressors to achieve specific political and military objectives.

Haleema's father is brutally killed before her eyes by the blood-thirsty forces for the slightest offence of daring to argue with the soldiers. As if this was not enough, her son, Imran, the only family person left in her family and life, is subjected to an enforced disappearance by the same forces. After this, Haleema's life becomes a tale of deprivation, helplessness and oppressive loneliness, the "absurdity" of which "was difficult to express in words" (*The Half Mother* 4). She tells Izhar, "Dear, something more tragic has happened since Ab Jaan's death, and it has not given me even the time to mourn him properly. Something more painful" (75). The extreme emotional and psychological turbulence that grips her stems from not knowing about her son's fate. In desperation, she goes to every prison, detention centre, army camp, and police station in search for her son, but he is to be seen nowhere. She comes across callous authorities, cheap politicians, helpless civil officials, amputated justice system, and partisan media. A police official, expressing abject helplessness in the face of military domination, tells her: "It has been a long time since we filed an FIR. A long, long time. Actually, we cannot lodge an FIR against the army. Our job is now confined to identifying, carrying and delivering dead bodies to their families" (63). If anything, the police official's words are an indication of the grim reality of the life in Kashmir in the 1990s; the Indian army managed and controlled everything. In all this Haleema feels an excruciating longing for her son, but she refuses to believe the worst. She takes an illusionary solace of finding some light amidst all the darkness that surrounds her life. She tries to take comfort in Imam's words, who tells her, "The greatest of sufferings bring the greatest of hopes, the greatest of miseries greatest patience, and the greatest of uncertainties lead to the greatest quests" (69). She ties a knot at a shrine promising that "*the knot will be untied when I will have found him, perhaps*" (80). In spite of her immense struggle, Haleema has a realisation deep inside her heart that she is fighting a lost battle. Her desperation and exasperation of living under immense oppression is summed up in the following words: "She hated having to believe she existed, to feel she was conscious. She hated the smell that sleep brought. She wished she were dead" (3).

Haleema's suffering becomes an embodiment of the suffering of the people of her nation living under the unbearable shadows of oppression. She is forced into submission and depravity by her oppressors. Haleema's story reverberates beyond her individual story, and becomes representative of the tragic lives of the people of Kashmir living under India's military siege and oppression. The narrative is as much about Haleema's self as about the space she inhabits. Her emotional numbness and psychological turmoil correspond to the collective voicelessness and dispossession of a people numbed into silence by the saga of military oppression about which the world has chosen to close its eyes. Haleema is changed from a psychological and subjective being into a historical agent actively taking part in the historical action. Through her narrative, the perspectives of other Kashmiris - children, fathers, sons, mothers, wives, even the repressive establishment, come to fore. These different perspectives put up variedly enunciated points of view regarding the particular historical situation faced by Kashmiris. All characters in the novel become active participants in a historical process. About such narratives, Barbara Harlow argues:

Resistance narratives embedded as they are in the historical and material conditions of their production and given furthermore the allegiances and active participation of their authors, often on the front lines, in the political events of their countries, testify to the nature of the struggle for liberation as it is enacted behind the dissembling statistics of media coverage and official government reports...The resistance narrative is not only a document, it is also an indictment. (98)

The representation of Kashmir's armed conflict in the official accounts and media has never truly echoed the happenings on the ground. As a consequence, many vital aspects pertaining to the conflict have been hidden from the eyes of the outside world. In other words, an important historical phase of the oppressed Kashmiris has got confiscated in the hands of their oppressors since the latter are in control of everything pertaining to Kashmiris. Besides military control, the oppressors also strive to control the historical and cultural accounts of the subjugated people. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon remarks, "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's head of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (169). In the novel, this aspect is reflected in the words of Haleema's father, Ab Jaan, who tells Imran after the latter was badly scolded by his Pandit teacher for daring to ask about Kashmir's history: "Everything has a history. And we have a firm history. Our own history. Except the fact that it has never seen the light of day...Because some people don't want it to be there. Not a bit of it. They don't want us to know ourselves. They don't want us to learn about who we are" (*The Half Mother* 34). The novelist, through these words, is alluding to the history of Kashmir which has been appropriated by India and Pakistan to suit their hegemonic designs. These two nation-states have become story-tellers of master narratives in the context of Kashmir. Alluding to such panoptic states controlling the history of Kashmiris, Agha Shahid Ali poignantly notes:

Someone else in this world has been mentioning you,
Gathering news, itemizing your lives
For a file you'll never see

(Quoted in Sabitha)

According to Barbara Harlow, "the writers of the resistance movements consider it necessary to wrest that expropriated historicity back, reappropriate it for themselves in order to reconstruct a new world-historical order." (33) Bashir's novel, like that of his fellow compatriots, aims to do the same in the context of the 'charged' historical situation of their motherland. In doing so, they are producing a literature which, in Ghassan Kanafani's words "rejects the old sentimental outbursts and emerges with a unique feeling of profound sadness more commensurate with the realities of the situation" (3). This kind of literature resonates with the struggling Kashmiris' nationalist aspirations. It strives to reclaim the lost records.

In providing voice to the oppressed people *The Half Mother* challenges the dominant discourses of India and Pakistan. In this way, it approximates Salman Rushdie's view on how literature can challenge the crooked truths of power formations in the contemporary world:

It seems to me imperative that literature enter such arguments, because what is being disputed is nothing less than what the case, what is truth is and what untruth. If writers leave the business of making pictures of the world to politicians, it will be one of history's great and most abject abdications... there is a genuine need for political fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world. (5)

The novel brings to prominence the voices and aspirations of a suppressed people whose lives have been cast into silence. The stories in the novel, refined by the literary imagination, emanate from Bashir's subsistent experiences in the Kashmir conflict. In this narrative, the individual and collective consciousness are delicately fused together. The unique worth in this narrativisation lies in suggesting the most noteworthy facet of the conflict in Kashmir—the perceptions of the forgotten victims. In this context, Olive Senior argues:

Literature is above all, storytelling. And, as Chinua Achebe has said, storytelling is a threat. Storytellers, poets, writers, have always found ways of confronting tyranny, especially in spaces where such actions are dangerous and deadly. Throughout the ages, writers have developed and employed myriad literary devices and explored the fullest limits of language through satire, magical realism, fantasy, fable and so on. Writers over the ages have found ways of talking about issues – like politics – without seeming to talk about them. The function is not to present the world as it is, but to present it in a new light through the narrative power of art. Literature does not ask "What is it about?" It asks "How do we tell it to make it real?"

(Quoted in Guardian)

Shahnaz Bashir's novel is not a plain description of victimhood; rather, its power lies in its being a touching testimony of humanity at a certain point in history which forms the soul of literature.

References:

- Bashir, Shahnaz. *The Half Mother*. New Delhi: Hachette India, 2014. Print.
- Bose, Sumantra. *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2003. Print.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, Tr. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963. Print.
- Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature*. London: Methuen & Co, 1987. Print.
- Hyndman, Jennifer and Wenona Giles (eds). *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Print.

- Independent People's Tribunal on Human Rights Violations in Kashmir. *Kashmir: Incarcerated Land and People*. Srinagar: Report of Independent People's Tribunal on Human Rights Violations in Kashmir, 2010. Print.
- Kanafani, Ghassan. "Poetry of Resistance in Occupied Palestine." Trans. Sulafa Hijawi, 1966. Web.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. New Delhi: Zubaan Publications, 2003. Print.
- Nayeem, Hameedah. "Hopeless Kashmiri Women." *Greater Kashmir* 10 March 2013. Web.
- Nepam, Binalakshmi. "Gender Based Violence in Conflict Zones: Case Study of Impact of Ongoing Armed Conflict, Small Arms Proliferation and Women's Response in India's Northeast." *CEQUIN*, 2010. Web.
- Rushdie, Salman. "Outside the Whale." *GRANTA*, 1984. Web.
- Sabitha, T. P. "The Beloved Witness: A Homage to Agha Shahid Ali." *Indian Literature* 46, 1(Jan-Feb.), pp. 180-183, 2002. Web.
- Senior, Olive. "Literature is Political." *The Guardian* 29 April 2013. Web.
- Zaidi, Nishat. "Karbala as Metaphor in the Poetry of Agha Shahid Ali." *Indian Literature* 51, 1(Jan-Feb), pp. 154-167, 2007. Web.

Translations

Life is a whirling flame
Flashing like a red rose
A darkening glare of beams
Visible as a glistering sun.

A child wonderstruck
At the first lesson in school,
From a multifarious ambiguous tome!

In Python's mouth
Ruby flashes forth flames,
It is a bubble rising from the bosom
Of the dumb ecstatic lover of dreams!

The illusory goal,
Dark jungle of evening,
Steps into nowhere,
This is *the* dilemma, this *the* agony of life.

The gift of the wilderness of love
A glittering lamp for eyes,
The mirage of the cooling khol !

Just a little lifting of the curtain
And the vivid scene of resurrection,
It is the *Rahab* of
Self-muffled musings.

The isle that calls
The blossoming sea of horizon,
A whirlpool of moonlight.

The melodies of houries
Sets the djinns and giants into frenzy,
Wine that goes down the throat
Like sweetness sip by sip.

Reading the pages of destiny at midnight
Under the blood-burning lamp,
At dawn, life is but
A random stodgy choice.

Lie in ambush for the lion
In a thorny bush,
Life is but a dance
On the edge of a ditch.

Without, a vivifying jungle
Within, a volcano
Life is a dream of the ascetic,
Mad after nymphs.

Kissing the gallows, the frenetic lover
Embraced life,
Breaching the set path
A hot pursuit of retribution.

Squeeze narcissistic essence
From flaming words,
Life is a torment that entices
With soothing allurements.

Translated from Kashmiri by Hamida Bano

THE PLUNDER

Ahad Zargar

I endured the agonizing pain of love,
And he plundered my faith as well as belief,
It is a long tale,
And how could I share it with the stranger?
Since I heard his melody,
I forgot the Kalima and henceforth wore the thread of love.
I separated from Kaba and got entangled with the temple.
He grinded me to the extent that my soul gathered the speed,
Seeking and searching for Him my sixth sense got ablaze,
My inmost scorched and I vanished forthwith.
The sweetheart is wrapped up in a dazzling radiant dress,
All the seven heavens are swinging His cradle,
The songs of the houries suit His dignity,
The charming lands of magicians fall under the kingship
Of my fascinating beloved.
The whole universe is under His subordination.
My passion chained me with love,
Now I am the lover now I am the beloved,
Ahad Zargar is an ardent lover of his being.

Translated from Kashmiri by Majrooh Rashid

Who Could Count?

Who could count?
The springs of my imagination,
Parched in the wasteland,
And how could my bosom bloom,
When the darling was in far off lands?
The unsatiating tulips always shriveled on the hillocks,
And the dew filled the cups of iris,
Blossoming in the hapless graveyards.
The tavern of love has been closed,
And the human blood is selling cheaper.
Hadn't the autumn plundered the garden?
The soothing spring flowers would adore the landscape.
None could tell you the sad tale of this uncertain city,
Save the innocent desire incarcerated for many a time?
The powerless call of Zareef is addressed to tomorrow,
Is there any problem with the treatment of his words?
You ought to introspect.

Translated from Kashmiri by Majrooh Rashid

Bear Dance

Samina Ashraf

Shams was the only son of his poor parents. He was a pampered child but calling him so is like making fun of him because of his poverty. He was very fond of studies. He wanted to get admission in a reputed high school but for that he needed high approach and hefty amount as the poor do not have either of the two.

Somehow he managed to get admission in a local school. When he wrote his matric examination, his father advised him to learn some skill for two to three months because poor people do not have any other option before them. Shams did not agree with his father as he wanted to become a doctor or an engineer. His mother also spoke in favour of her son so his father had to change his opinion. So, Shams spent three months studying in different libraries. Meanwhile the result was declared and Shams qualified it with a good percentage. After joining the higher secondary he again qualified his 11th class examination with good percentage but he could not get admission either in a medical or in an engineering college for which he had worked very hard. On the contrary, the influential and affluent people who had secured lesser percentage than him had made it to these professional colleges.

On seeing all this, Shams would feel frustrated that in spite of his hard work, his dream remained unfulfilled. His father encouraged him by saying that the minimum he can do is to do his graduation in Science whereas he knew that graduation has become useless. Wherever he saw an advertisement for employment, he would apply and thus appear in an interview everywhere. At the time of interview, he would always face difficulties because he would be asked questions about films for doing a job in the Agricultural department. At certain places, he would perform better than what interviewers had expected of him but would not figure in any selection list because interview would be only a formality as the affluent and influential had already been appointed against those posts.

What added to the misery of Shams was that his father had suffered a heart attack which culminated into one sided paralysis. Because of this, the condition of his home became miserable. Seeing all these things, he would sometimes lose his patience. One day in a state of frustration, he entered some hotel to take a cup of tea. There, his eyes fell on an advertisement of employment in a newspaper. The employment advertisement required a graduate in zoo-keeping. Knowing that all interviews are useless, he still went to face the interview. There he discovered that four hundred candidates had applied for it. To ensure and maintain the secrecy of the interview, the interviewers had made arrangement for separate entrance and exit so that the interviewees do not know what questions are asked inside. Shams was getting strange thoughts that the interviewers could either ask this or that question but at the same time he finally wanted to try his luck, that is why he was very confident. The moment his turn came he showed his documents to the officer. They asked him that if he were a bear kept in a cage of a zoo, how he would dance to make people happy. Shams stood up and giving up his shame started dancing like a bear. All the officers got very happy and almost convulsed with laughter. They appreciated his dance by giving him a very big hand

and directed him to join the duty from tomorrow. Shams was very happy and after thanking them left the office thinking to himself that if he had learnt bear dance all these years instead of studies, it would have been far better as it is this bear dance that has come to his rescue. He conveyed this good news to his family and next day dressing himself in a suit left for the office. After reaching the office, he was asked to take off his suit and wear the mask of a bear. They also told him to stay inside the cage of a bear and the moment visitors come close to your cage you start dancing like a bear and thus make them laugh. For this he will be paid two thousand rupees per month. After this he was locked in a cage and by evening he would be taken out of the cage and allowed to go home. For some months he kept dancing like a bear and this way the financial position of his family became better.

One day when he was dancing in a cage a tiger from the same zoo slipped out of its cage. There was chaos and confusion everywhere. Women raised hue and cry, children started weeping and men started fleeing. A pandemonium broke out, due to the negligence of an employee; the door of the cage of bear had remained open. The tiger came running straight towards the cage of the bear. The moment the bear saw the tiger approaching its cage, it fainted out of fear. The tiger entered the cage of the bear and tried to wake him up by saying "Hey Shams" get up, I am like you wearing the mask of a tiger. I am Sulla your friend. Shams regained his consciousness and this way both the animals of a zoo hugged each other.

Translated from Kashmiri by Tasleem Ah War

Poems

Fastening

the chains of your looks
around the tree of my being
you now insist
that I move on the slippery trail
of the unpredictable time
that passes through the heart's woods
and leads nowhere!
I will wait and wait
till you come
to turn the fetters into the bosom feathers
of the golden pair of doves
that would coo softly
when I would hold them gently
one by one
in my cupped hands.

Yet again this evening

at sunset
the naughty boy
incarcerated
in the cell of my sophistication
was driven crazy
by the brown horizon of the city,
and stubbornly desired
to rush to the country
to play on the swings
of the evening shadows
hanging in the twilight
from the blue sky.
Flitting from star to star
the fireflies of his looks
swung in ecstasy
and bedazzled me
with his full rustic charm.

The Worn out Wrap

Throw away

this worn out wrap of sunshine
that eclipsed your moonlight
from times immemorial
The shores of my desire
stayed restive
to soak
in the changing circular forms
of the spume of the tides
that rise from the innermost of the sea's bosom
when the simmering moon
takes a dip in it.

Majrooh Rashid

A Poem Recreated!

Sometimes
were that
in a heavy downpour
I get wet
and lose myself.
My tears mingle with raindrops
and no one sees my tears
neither you
nor the world.
I burn down in water
with my eternal longing for you
and
with me vanishes
the yearning for you.

Abid Ahmad

I wish I could say more
but words fail me
I feel them slip
from the edges of my mouth
and fall down and break
on the tricky road of meaning.

Making meaning is a murky drive
it shuts the tongue
and silences the language
with bumps of communication

I thought it better
to give silence a chance
I hope I failed
I don't want to make meaning
I feel to be naked
when I make sense.

Abid Ahmad

I.

Bury me in the mud of knowledge
Put me in the pit of religion
Or, throw me in the fire of science,
I will come out unhurt and pure
As I am the seed unserviceable
As I am the filth, unusable.
Embrace me oh mountains, come,
I have a heavier load, than yours.
Teach me the endurance and patience.
You stand unshakable and unhurt
But here, I am a broken glass.
I am a cloud from dry land,
Oh clouds, come and take me away,
In the heights where angles stay,
On the mountains where saints pray,
And where peasants make hay.
Oh sun hastily burn me down,
So that I will die unknown,
I was not bound for a crown,
Burn me in an alien town.
Stars, don't play hide and seek,
Listen to my woeful, awful shriek.
No powers, am lazy and weak,
Pay heed to my grouses meek...

II.

Kill me or give me freedom,
How long will suppression prevail!
Let me live oh devils
The way I want to live,
Or pluck out my eyes,
So that I couldn't see
Woman's cry and child's wail.
We live in a dark age

Where human rights too fail,
Tormented minds, wounded bodies:
Our sorrows, *nobody* to heal.
Where oppression crosses limits,
When houses turn into jail,
And tyranny crosses bounds,
When human blood is on sale,
Death, suffering and destruction,
Is all about man's tale.
Let me know the sea
Where humanity is on sail.

Book Reviews

Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History by Jay Winter. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. X + 309 pages. 12.95 pounds.

M L Raina

'Only that which does not cease to hurt remains in memory'.

Nietzsche

'And someone pitched his burden in the muck/Muttering O Christ almighty I am stuck'.

Siegfried Sassoon

Surveying her dead sons sprawled on the battlefield of Kurukheshtra, Gandhari could only mutter curses on those who brought about the carnage. In Homer's 'Iliad' the brutal killing of Hector evokes similar disgust. In Henri Barbusse's 'Under Fire' and Hemingway's 'A Farewell to Arms' the experience of actual battle with its attendant gore and blood is a reminder that war can never be romanticised. Even the cynicism of Bertolt Brecht could not hide the tender grief of Katrin's death in 'Mother Courage', harsh though Brecht's satire is on the perpetrators of suffering.

A passage from Richard Aldington's novel 'Death of a Hero' (an egregious omission from Winter's otherwise richly endowed book) should give us an idea of what the actual combat is like. "Men were killed by direct hits, and wounded by pieces of flying metal... All that night and far into the misty dawn the stretchers went down the communication trench carrying inert figures with horrible foam on their mouths". This cures the hero Winterbourne's idealism and brings him face to face with the grime and misery of warfare. In much war writing scenes like these are noted for the stark factualness of their presentation.

Presentations such as these form the crux of Winter's book. Jay Winter is a cultural historian, not a literary critic. On the basis of this book I can confidently compare him with Peter Gay whose five-part study of the bourgeois imagination 'from Victoria to Freud' is a model of cultural history in our time. He also shares with Paul Fussel ('Great War and Modern Memory') and Samuel Hynes ('A War Imagined') the distinction of writing a broad-sweep history of the non-military aspect of what historians such as A.J.P Taylor and more recently John Keegan have called The Great War 1914-18.

His singular achievement, however, is that he does not confine himself to literature, as does Fussel, but also takes into his ambit non-literary sources from British, German and French archives. He is at ease with everything from church records, architectural structures, and memoirs of surviving soldiers, paintings, musical compositions, films as well as literary works. Here we have a veritable embarrassment of riches in that his research draws no distinction between the kinds of sources he uses. Hynes also uses contemporary paintings, but

Winter's canvas is much larger and extends to countries beyond Great Britain. Fussell concentrates chiefly on British writing.

Jay Winter is a historian with the patina of religious sentiment. He does not see the history of the Great War as the unfolding of a divine scheme of sin and retribution. What he does in this book is to study how the survivors of the war and their families and other kin came to terms with their losses. Considering that casualties were heavy and the mutilations of numerous survivors beyond relief, it was natural that returned soldiers and grieving kin should find means of alleviating their sorrow in mutual sympathy and help.

The various forms of the healing process are Winter's theme and he pursues it with the frenetic enthusiasm of a committed scholar. What impresses one in Winter's presentation is a combination of the historian's need for evidence and the humanist's belief in the restorative power of human empathy, concern and understanding. The result is a history replete with insights into the workings of the human psyche under stress. Since Winter's provenance is wide enough, his findings acquire the quality of general statements that could well be true in all ages and times. In this way he rescues the history of the Great War from the condescension of ideologically motivated grinders of personal axes.

Winter states his purpose in a brief statement: "the backward gaze of so many writers, artists, poets, politicians, soldiers and everyday families... reflected the universality of grief and mourning". This universality of grief is embodied in what Winter calls the traditional languages of mourning. These are languages of religious sentiment—ritual, ceremony and observance—through whose mediations communities and societies have sustained themselves in their hours of loss. Winter also calls them 'languages of remembrance' of which art is one. As he says in answer to Adorno's belief in the failure of language to account for the Holocaust, "Literature must resist this verdict... The language of real suffering tolerates no forgetting... it is now virtually in art alone that it finds its own voice, consolation."

Before Winter discusses how different art forms such as sculpture, painting and writing confronted the horrors of war, he evokes the communal rituals in the communities of soldiers' next of kin, rituals that refreshed the memories of the slain soldiers by evoking their presence individually and collectively. In this context he analyses Gance's 1919 film 'J'accuse' in which dead French soldiers rise up to visit their communities to see that their sacrifice has not been in vain. As it is, 'J'accuse' is a moving film in which the rhetoric of patriotic sentiment is weighed against the realities of suffering and pain endured by all. I happen to have seen it recently and can confirm the sheer force of Gance's condemnation of the war. Apart from the film there are references to war diaries of the dead as well as to church records to suggest that the 'dead had come back'.

Winter does not tell us whether 'the dead' have come back in the nightmare experiences of the survivors or as a ritual of expiation of their memories. There is a whole tradition of religious and secular lore in which the resurrection of the dead is seen as a

warning to the living. The Hindu practice of *Shrada* is a means of remembering the dead ancestors on their anniversaries. By this practice the immediate grief of their departure is mitigated. Winter details similar evocations in France, Germany and Britain to suggest that remembrance of the loved ones is for the families an act of filial piety.

The author believes such practices became common after the Great War. What he does not tell us and what should be common knowledge is the fact of remembrance as a permanent source of catharsis for the bereaved families. Our experience of the aftermath of Kargil is a reminder of the ubiquity of such practices. The building of memorials to the dead is a way of making their presence permanent. Winter's best pages are given to analysing the war memorials such as the Cenotaph in London, Monument to the Missing at Thiepval in France, Vietnam War memorial in Washington and other such emblems of commemorative piety. Here again we find parallels in India, particularly in the commemorative *chhatris* built by Rajput kings in Rajasthan. The purpose of these structures is to offer sustenance from religious art as well as redemption of the sufferings of war and, at a further remove, some hope of transcendence. Winter's strength is in reading the traditional motifs in their specific relevance to the present grief. In the process older forms of art were rediscovered and found answering the modern needs for consolation and cheer.

As Winter sees them war memorials enforce a collective meaning, distancing personal grief and merging it in collective remembrance. 'In the constructed war memorial death is deconstructed: its horror, its undeniable individuality, its trauma and the ignominy often associated with it, are buried'. But war memorials also present the state's view of martyrdom in the service of the country, an event that ignores the gruesome fact of individual death and its impact on the bereaved families. As experience shows, abstractions cannot replace the pain of personal loss. Winter seems rather indifferent to this aspect of the institutionalisation of remembrance.

At this stage Winter lays special emphasis on the relevance of the movement for spiritualism that spread across Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Great War. Researches in parapsychology and other non-rational modes of being were taking place in the nineteenth century but received a boost immediately after the war. The reasons for this are obvious. People found relief from the memories of the conflict. Madame Blavatsky rediscovered Indian mysticism and in the popular form *seances* became frequent occurrences in the drawing rooms of the rich. Literary scholars would conjure up visions of Madame Sosostriis in Eliot and Mrs. Viveash in Huxley's 'Antic Hay' (to say nothing of Yeats's own experiments) who seek their own ways of coping with the dead. I would be skeptical about attributing the emergence of spiritualism solely to the Great War, and I would want some other explanation such as disgust with scientific temper itself to account for it.

Winter's descriptions of war paintings and war literature do not offer any new perspective but confirm his own belief in the traditional nature of the means of recuperating normal life after the war. In the chapter 'mythologies of war' he studies films, paintings,

sculptures by contemporary artists to support his view that remembrance of the war dead and confrontation with the very fact of death are contextualised in traditional imagery and myth. In this respect his detailed analysis of 'J'accuse' reveals the complexities of memorialisation itself. His passing references to "All Quiet on the Western Front" and other films are designed to buttress his point about the traditional basis of remembering the departed. "From Gance to Kurasawa films have entered the realms of the mythical by telling stories about the eternal themes common to all cultures", he remarks. This is not true of films designed for nationalistic propaganda, such as Soviet films, which extol the heroism of Soviet soldiers alone, like 'Battle of Stalingrad,' 'Fall of Berlin' and 'Cranes are Flying'.

Winter's study is packed with detail and is in the best tradition of history that derives not from officially designated sources alone, but from popular sources and oral evidence as well. But it has importance for literary scholars. It revises our notions of modernism and makes us look afresh at our assumptions about what literary historians call modernism. A break with the past, disjunction in language, a questioning of the foundations of belief are attributes commonly given to the Modernist Movement in Europe. Winter thinks that far from rejecting the old, the modernists (he includes the art of the period in it) retained traditional and customary symbols to explain and make sense of the traumatic modern experience such as the Great War.

Speaking of the war poets he maintains that 'their modernism was the product of a recasting of traditional languages, not their rejection'. Though this will not be the final judgment on the Modernist Movement, it does make us rethink our position. Granted that Eliot, Joyce and Yeats were traditionalists in spite of their characteristic modernistic methods, we cannot ignore the fact that the Great War was a typically modern event both in its ferocity and its casualties.

Similarly, the Second World War was equally grim what with thermonuclear weapons wreaking unspeakable destruction. Winter has yet to convince many that the 1939-45 cannot be accommodated the way 1914-18 can be into acceptable traditional terms. Contrary to his belief that the real rupture took place in 1939-45, historians would continue to regard 1914-1918 as an irrevocable point that, to quote Giles Winterbourne from Aldington's novel mentioned earlier, 'ended our innocence for good'. It also provided continuity between Ypres and Somme on the one hand, and Dachau and Treblinka on the other.

Welcome to Our Hillbrow by Phaswane Mpe; Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012; pp. xxvii+121; PB

Tej Nath Dhar

Welcome to Our Hillbrow is the Ohio University reprint of Mpe's novel, first published by the University of Natal Press in 2001. Mpe had already established himself as a promising novelist, poet and essayist, when he died at the young age of thirty-four in 2004.

A novel about post-apartheid Africa, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is a mix of the western novelist narrative and the native oral narrative. Events and happenings in the lives of its characters are presented in the realistic manner, but through the native communal narrative mode. When the narrator who figures in the beginning of the novel is replaced by a new one, almost in its middle, he is no different from the earlier one - neither in thinking nor in style. The action of the novel too shifts with ease from this world to the world beyond, from the terrestrial to the celestial.

The novel revolves round two main characters, Refentse and Refilwe, and their complicated love life in Hillbrow, a violent suburb of Johannesburg, a "menacing monster," described in detail in its opening part. Refentse comes from Tiragolong to Hillbrow to study in the University of Witwatersrand, completes his education, and gets a job in the same university. through him we get to know the physical contours of Hillbrow, its vagrant population and their passion for football, its ugliness and perversions, scandalous stories, and its tendency to blame outsiders for its ills.

Refentse breaks off with Refilwe because of her infidelities, falls in love with Lareto, and earns his mother's anger, because she is not from his place. When he finds Lareto in bed with Sammy, his friend, he commits suicide, although just before that he too had love to Sammy's girlfriend Bohlale. Refilwe works for a newspaper, aspires to be a writer, goes to study in England, falls in love with a Nigerian because he looks like Refentse, and returns home with AIDS to die in her home.

This complicated plot, which is unraveled in bits and pieces, is used by Mpe to deal with some significant features of the post-apartheid society of his times.

Even though the country is free from the scourge of the apartheid, there is no significant change in the situation out there. Having internalized what had been put into their heads for years on end, people still believe that life's realities "lay exclusively in euphemisms... where any criticism of Apartheid thinking became a threat to public morals". The native culture is ridiculed by its own people. The use of the native language Sepedi is considered a sign of inferiority. Refilwe's writing in her own language is called vulgar by her critics. What is permissible in English is taboo in Sepedi. People also consider AIDS a mysterious ailment, speak about in hushed tones and believe it comes only from outside, especially from the Nigerians. In fact, people believe that most of their ills have come from outside. This thinking is so deep-rooted that Refilwe exploits it to create her own version of

Refentse's suicide, which finds ready acceptance among her people. This also hints at the problem related to the reconstruction of people's past.

By providing a true picture of the post-apartheid society of his day, which is dominated by violence, euphemism, linguisticism and xenophobia, Mpe comes off as a sensitive artist who is keen on raising the level of consciousness of his people. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* reads well and touches upon some significant aspects of postcolonial writings. The novel's introduction by Ghirmai Negash of Ohio University provides a comprehensive discussion of its formal features and thematic concerns.