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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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# English

## Studies in India

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## Editor's Note

From the current issue, *English Studies in India* (*ESI*) becomes a refereed journal. It will aim at achieving excellence in publishing articles by referring manuscripts to referees for their opinion. From now on, we will be accepting even unsolicited papers but publish them only after getting them reviewed by some eminent scholars in the field.

The journal will continue to receive support from different scholars who have been helping us in the past. This augers well with our Department having turned fifty last year, which we celebrated as our Golden Jubilee.

We will continue to be interested in receiving research articles on various themes in and on English literature and language written any where in the world. Since the scholarship has moved away from the canon to include new literatures, we would welcome scholars to contribute papers with insights into Postcolonial, Caribbean, Australian, African and Indian literatures, and related critical theories.

We would like to receive research articles on Kashmiri literature, language and culture, in particular, so that this rich yet relatively less known language gets appropriate place in the world literary cultural tradition.

The format of the journal will remain unchanged: besides research articles, there will be separate sections devoted to creative writing, translation, especially of Kashmiri texts into other languages and vice versa, and book reviews as will be found in the current issue.

### Note for 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 clarity; otherwise just omit them. Use intra-text citations with all references consolidated into a final alphabetised section. The proper style/format for citations is as follows:

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| (Author[s] Year) | - No comma between author(s) and date. Eg (Derrida 1985) or (Wimsatt and Brooks 1999) |
| (Author[s] Year 1, Year 2, etc) | - Comma between dates of successive publications by same author(s) Eg (Chomsky 1960, 1974) or (Rao 1979a, 1979b) |
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**Examples of References**


Ayer, A J. 1997. *Language, Truth and Logic*. Penguin: Harmondsworth, England.

Giles, H. (ed). 1977. *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations.* London: Academic Press.

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# Contents


*English Studies in India* *Volume XVIII* *January 2010*


## Articles

# Contemporary Writing and Postmodern Aesthetics

***G K Das***

Contemporary writing and postmodern aesthetics are two independent domains. They strategically relate to each other, however, rather like live-in couples — a trend getting fashionable in India, though it is a well -established and progressive tradition in the West. Necessity makes an Adiga and a Derrida strange bedfellows, as are a Roy and a Spivak, for instance: path-breaking, self-regarding latter-day honeymooners. So are contemporary writing and postmodern aesthetics, swearing loyalty and allegiance to being partners in need, the market ethic that sweeps the contemporary world ethos.

Traditionally, some assumptions of the discipline of aesthetics are: a sense of beauty, a sense of form, and a sense of commitment. Conrad who by and large was a traditionalist, felt nervous when he set down something on paper; writing meant to him a commitment. Such is not the style of postmodern writing, however. A relatively greater sense of freedom, lesser introspectiveness and concern with form that implies self-discipline and commitment to the other, patently distinguish postmodern writing or writer or artist.

Postmodern aesthetics seem to be guided more by a sense of formlessness, and by the urge to question traditional ethical and philosophical ideas of good, beauty, truth and value and the impulse to construct one's own parameters. Aesthetic constructions by the young Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Portrait*, or even by Hamlet in Shakespeare's timeless play, too, show a radically revolutionary impulse at work, making one wonder what really is new in

postmodern aesthetics. Can one say it is a cultivated exercise in rejection of aesthetics as a discipline?

In a cogently argued and persuasive essay titled 'What is beyond Art: on the theories of postmodernity' Fernec Feh'er, illustrating the failings of the neo-avant-garde says: "Adding the preface 'neo' to avant-garde, that which is already obsolete will not solve the problem.... People brought up on the sociological theories of mass society, alienation, feticism, and manipulation(especially manipulation by mass media) are in any case inclined to regard as a network of social relations which, as a result of its heavy involvement in public affairs, simply could not have avoided being institutionalized.' This, more or less, sums up the crisis in postmodern aesthetics.

I want to argue, however, that principles of aesthetics and literary artifacts, at some point of time, depending on the full potential of the human emotional intellect, and also the need and demands of the age, generate major and minor storms of creativity. The evaluation of the power of any particular text / author, or of a cultural movement would depend not so much on its nomenclature, or categorization, or on the market, but rather on relative individual/ community perception, by and large. With that sort of a premise in mind, let us look at some samples of contemporary writing vis-à-vis the highly tentative and rather nebulous aesthetic considerations that they might call for.

Let me begin with two of our older contemporaries: Tagore and Premchand. In a fairly early publication of 1918(by Macmillan, London) titled *Lover's Gift* AND *Crossing,* Tagore expostulates with his own text— a poem titled 'Lover's Gift', on the subject of its aesthetic vs. market dimension.

> Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where
> the learned muddle
> the summer breeze with their snuff;
> Where men endlessly dispute
> whether the oil depends upon the cask,
> or the cask upon the oil;
> where yellow manuscripts frown
> upon the fleet-footed frivolousness of life?
> My song cries out, Ah, no, no, no....

The expostulation goes on, with the song saying 'no' to every question of the poet, except the last one:

> Is it there where the least of a bird's notes
> Is never missed,
> Where the stream's babbling finds its full wisdom,
> where all the lute-strings of the world
> shower their music
> upon two fluttering hearts?
> [And] My song replies, Yes, yes.

Tagore here is clearly rejecting the aesthetics of the market place, to use the language of Joyce; the aesthetics that, in some thirty/ forty years after him were to become the prime- mover of postmodern writing, in India. He never wrote with the Nobel Prize in mind, which, of course, came to him as 'leaves come upon the tree' as it were. (Now, it is common knowledge how literature is produced for winning an award; there's, of course, nothing wrong about that however.)

The text of Premchand that I want to refer to is one his early ones: the novel *Sevasadan*, first written in Urdu in 1917 and in Hindi the following year (1918). The narrative is set in old Benaras, during a period of cultural transition. In a wave of modernization, the city's time-honoured courtesans, inhabiting its central chowk, were being made to flee the city, of whose name and fame they were an integral part. Their dislocation, deprivation of livelihood, and loss of a home of sorts became a critical subject for a sensitive writer to write about. Would prostitutes, their squalid gullies, their living condition, and their destitution be an aesthetically wholesome subject for the young Premchand, the moralist? His answer of course, was 'yes'. In *Sevasadan,* Premchand filled in minute details—as Dostoevsky had done before him in Crime and punishment. Every detail caught his eye and imagination and was narrated with verve.

According to Premchand, 'ugliness' was, aesthetically, as important and attractive a subject for contemplation, and literary composition, as beauty was. 'Ugliness' is attributive, while beauty is predicative, and both are aesthetically valuable phenomena, according to Frank Sibley. *(Approaches to Aesthetics,* OUP 2001)

The protagonist of Sevasadan, Suman, who is the wife of a labourer, courts prostitution; and a crucial passage in the novel shows her in a self- reflective moment debating her condition of shame, fear and servitude, and is (implicitly) on the side of dismissing the moral question involved.

> 'She sat there for a long time, trying to disentangle cause from effect. Finally, she came to the conclusion: Bholi [Bholi bai] is independent while my own feet are in shackles. Her warehouse (*dukan*) is open and there is a rush of clients, while my warehouse is shut, so no one stands and waits. She has no thought for barking dogs, I am scared of social censure. She is outside purdah while I am inside it. She chirps freely as she hops from branch to branch, while I cling to one branch. It is shame, the fear of ridicule, which makes me the servant of others.'
>
> (trans. Snehal Shingavi)

About fifty /sixty years from Tagore and Premchand, there was a cultural change in our country: Independence from colonial rule was its hallmark, the change to this day proved not so much cultural, really, but political, constitutional rather. Culturally, freedom from British rule hasn't meant much; masses of people in our country continue to be enslaved in poverty, sickness, and illiteracy. The so called middle or upper classes are more anglicized to-day than before; culturally, that means discarding an identity before it could be had, and becoming an amorphous entity. Science, technology, business and trade have advanced, and we now have a lead in automobile manufacture in the world. Also, lately, we seem to have discovered a thin layer of moist surface on the moon, the molecules from which could be turned to water, we are told. That indeed is a very bright side of our country's scientific-technologico face and of our development as a nation, on the road to prosperity.

Yet, speaking of originality or advances in the domains of thought, ideas, theory, and excellence in accomplishment in the fields of arts, aesthetics , philosophy, and social sciences, we have not much, to show, really. There is hardly a new critical theory, a new aesthetic formulation, a new philosophy, or even a new economic policy that we can claim to have given to the world in the last fifty or sixty years. Our most respectable cultural export to the world today, no doubt, is Gandhism . Our most successful exporters perhaps are Messrs. Haldiram and Co. The consumerist domain of plus- minuses of free India does constitute the staple of most of contemporary writing, not only by the insiders like a Roy or an Adiga, but also by several members of the Indian 'Diaspora, like a Rushdie, Vikas Swaroop. No aesthetics is more congenial to their art and craft than the freewheeling postmodern brand.

# Contemporary Fiction: Revisionary Look at Emerging Trends*

*M L Raina*

'Emerging trends in contemporary fiction' is a somewhat marquee title for this paper. . It is nobody's case that that what is emerging has just emerged or that the emerging literatures have just sprung out of the blue and are clamouring for recognition. In every social formation new forces emerge over long periods of time while old forces remain intact even after the new forces have become dominant. Raymond Williams, who for me is the most creative of contemporary English Marxist intellectuals, saw social formations striated with dominant, residual and emerging trends and concluded that 'in authentic historical analysis it is necessary at every point to recognize the complex inter-relations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance' (*Marxism and Literature*, London 1977: 121). So, it becomes difficult to pinpoint at what stage the new and the emerging tendencies began and when the old ones died out, if at all. It can also happen that whereas some literatures display a major dominant trend, others may still be struggling with residual tendencies, as I hope to remark in the course of this paper...

It is generally agreed (rather arbitrarily in my opinion) that the current tendency in the West is towards a non-realistic literatures which challenges realism's claims to authenticity. While I can be comfortable with this observation, I shall have to question the literary historians' assumption that non or anti-realism is a new tendency. Secondly it is necessary to account for the emergence of this tendency by studying the social changes that made these tendencies acceptable. Usually it is assumed that the advent of post-modernism as a literary and philosophical world-view relegated realist assumption into the background. But, when we see these very worldviews cutting through the dominant t rationalist world-views of the age of enlightenment, we begin to question the effectiveness of such periodizations. But then we have to start somewhere, even if for convenience's sake, to see tendencies that characterize literary production in various languages. I am not competent to speak for all literatures of the world or of all the genres of a single literature, but can outline the directions in the literatures that I know, mostly English, Russian and French and here again I may be pardoned if I focus my attention on one major genre, the novel, for the simple reason that poetry, even though its demands and techniques change in time, is resistant to periodic cataclysms in the way the novel is not.

It would not be inappropriate to claim that the modernist novel was born with Alice in Wonderland in the same way in which the disjointed character of modernist poetry can be traced to 'Locksley Hall Revisited' of Tennyson, the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud as well as the innovatory techniques of Mayakovasky and the Russian Symbolist School. The chronology of anti-realistic postmodernist writing descends directly from Alice in Wonderland and Tristram Shandy to the experimentation of Joyce and William Faulkner, and from them to contemporaries such as Beckett, Borges, Calvino and Milan Kundera as well as Martin Amis, Julian Barnes and Salman Rushdie, to mention only the more prominent names. Similarly, the dramaturgy of Brecht and Ionescoe must be traced to the experimentation of Shakespeare as well as of Sanskrit drama traditions or Noh plays or the stark grimness of Pirandello and Strindberg.

If contemporary literature is trapped in a relentless search for stable meanings and stable realities, then in Alice in Wonderland is arrested the artistic and aesthetic alienation of the modern and post-modern artists who must tell the tale in order not to die of the truth, even though truth itself is ambiguous, elusive and ultimately

*This is a revised version of the author's keynote address that he delivered in a seminar at Patiala University, Patiala.

only partial. Alice's world is a veritable mansion of mirrors (remember the beginning of Orson Welles's film of Kafka's The Trial through an overlapping corridor of mirrors) in an unending quest for meaning and identity at the end of a labyrinthine journey. As both a modernist and a postmodernist, Alice must transform the outer green world into an enclosed autotelic pleasure dome of 'Through the Looking Glass'. This is not yet the labyrinth of Alan Robbe-Grillet's novel in which wandering is its own goal; it is a labyrinth in which the categories of the realist convention are severally tested, even to the extent of language becoming solipsistic(' Words mean what I want them to mean', says Alice). It is also not the labyrinth of Joyce's Stephen Daedalus who seeks to recreate the conscience of his race via its mazes. It is a labyrinth through which Alice discovers the limitations of conventional plots and notions of verisimilitude, that is the limitation of realism and the notion of a homogenous subject, now challenged by postmodernist and some third world post-colonial writers. It is a labyrinth in which she sees the absurdity of all the so-called coherent categories of experience.

## II

Realism is both a worldview and a method of rendering it in literature. It presupposes a robust faith in the convergence of reality and our relationship to it. For Georg Lukacs the theoretician and the realist novel of 19th & 20th centuries, realism expresses a belief in the centrality of the human subject as well as the centrality of objective reality independent of human subjectivity. What Alfred Kazin says of American realism can be applied to all realist writing. Realism for Kazin is concerned with 'the sights and sounds of common life, with transcriptions of the average experience, with reproducing, sometimes parodying, but always participating in the whole cluster of experiences which make up the native culture'(On Native Grounds, New York, 1966: 207). Lukacs believed that realism 'can achieve comprehensive description of the totality of society' (*The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, London, 1963: 96). Similarly, Eric Auerbach, whose 1953 book *Mimesis* (New Haven, 1958), is among the masterworks of 20th century criticism, believed in the power of realism to render a rounded image of man and society.



In Tolstoy, as E.M.Forster remarked, we hear those silent chords behind the scenes that link the personal with the historical, the easy domesticities of Pierre's household in War and Peace or the simple contentedness of the Kitty-Levin relationship in Anna Karenina with the heave and flow of historical momentum.(In this connection see

The power of narrative, particularly fictional narrative, is very great. As Steven Connor puts it, 'as well as enlarging and expanding, narrative can also transform, criticize, displace, limit, and interrupt'. (The English Novel in History, 1950-1995, London, 1995: 2). A realist narrative, seen in this light, has the capacity to be all-embracing, as the eighteenth and nineteenth century European novel has shown. Or as Raymond Williams believes 'it preserves the intensity and increasing complexity of human experience'. In other words realism as a world view, before it came under attack from various sources, particularly the post-modernist theory brigade, was girded on a conception of the human that saw humans as agents and vehicles of their own transformation.

Of course this notion of realism was criticized by Auerbach in the famous chapter on Virginia Woolf in Mimesis, and by modernists who added a psychological dimension to social realism and extended its scope beyond surface descriptions of objective reality. It was felt that Stream-of Consciousness was not a departure but an extension of reality itself, though Auerbach and later on Lukacs felt otherwise. (See Peter Brooks: *Realist Vision*, New Haven, 2008 and J.P Stern: *On Realism*, London 1973)

But the decline of realism followed the decline in the West's belief in the capacity of the human subject to shape and adjusts the self in relation to the outside world. Three trends emerged: one was that of the French New novel with its attempt to repudiate the human subject—its salient expression coming in the work of Robbe-Grillet and Claude Simon and Nathalie Sarraute. The other attack on realism came from the minimalists who saw in realist work the arrogance of human desire to dominate. This tendency is more apparent in post-war poetry as well as in the minimalist prose of American novelists like Federman as well as in the work of Samuel Beckett. It

was also a shift from the Aristotelian man in action who figured in realist novel to the immobile characters of Beckett's plays as well as in his fiction.

When Adorno and later George Steiner lamented that after the Holocaust, it was sacrilegious to write (Steiner lamented: 'as to the speech about God, what form can it take...after the death camps?) that, they were pointing out the shrinkage that the humanistic project had suffered as a result of the rampant depredations of the International Capital and the consequent decline in the measure of the human. In the poems of Paul Celan, the Romanian Jew who wrote in German, the language of his tormentors, 'the apocalypse of the inhuman' gets its calendar as well as its hallucinatory sense of extremity and terror. In the famous poem 'death fugue' the surrealistic imagery combines with an intricate musical structure to make the reality of the holocaust freeze in a kind of abstraction.: "Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening/we drink it midday morning/we drink k it at night/...we shovel a grave in the air/there you wont lie too cramped.' (Selected Poems, New York, 1977)

Such distrust of language is equally discernible in the French New Novel. Its chief proponent Alan Robbe-Grillet declared in his Snapshots that for him man was dead, not dead in the Nietschean sense, but dead as an agent and shaper of the world... 'Things are things, and man is man. To 'humanize the world' (a project of the realist imagination) is to anthropologize it'. His mission as well as the mission of his contemporaries is to drain their works of all human trace. This is the beginning of that phase of the post-human which apologists for post-modernism like Frederic Jameson and Baudelaire saw as characteristic reality of our own world. This is the phase Jameson characterises as marked by depthlessness and pastiche, since the faith in the linear evolution of the narrative is no longer available (see Jameson: *Postmodernism and the Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York, 1992). Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie is neither about the centipede whose movements on the wall are traced by the absent narrator, nor about the theme of jealousy. As in the other novel, In the Labyrinth, we are left uncertain as to the purport of the entire humanist enterprise.



Similarly, in the novels and plays of Samuel Beckett the large claims of the realist worldview are held up to a despairing scrutiny. Making a clear transition from the modernist tradition to the total non-realistic tradition of the minimalist novel, from the stability of the realist text to its revocation in the trilogy's second volume Malone Dies, what Beckett does in this as in other parts of the trilogy is to effect the foregrounding of the act of projecting a world rather than taking the world as given, the donnee.In the Unnamable the opening move of Malone Dies is duplicated in that the unnameable narrator claims to be the author of Malone's world as well as of the first volume Molloy. The barriers between the character's unnameable world and the author's own world are foregrounded, thereby rejecting the clear separation of the two as in realist writing...

It is in the fiction of the minimalist Italo Calvino in which the devices of non-realist genres such as the detective story are used to undercut the solidity of the realist picture. He encourages a peculiar playfulness in the reader which in turn leads to a cerebral pursuit of intangible ideas beyond words, story and plot. Calvino's world has been forged, as Thomas Pavel suggests, for the purpose of exploring cosmological designs. Thus in Cosmicomics Calvino inveigles the cosmos itself into his ironic play with words, worlds and ideas. In Invisible Cities the classic epistemological issues of appearance and reality, multiplicity of perspectives, the distortions of desire and memory are embodied in the question of reliability or unreliability of Marco Polo's account of the cities he visits. Calvino's passion for geometric patterns, along with his interest in folk tale create a body of work that shuns the psychological analysis of the realist work In this world the reader no longer recognizes himself as a homogenous subject but mutates, as with the reader of If on a Winter Night, according to the different texts that the novel is supposed to become with each reader. This is the ultimate post-modernist strategy of displacing the reader from the centre of fictional experience. As the defeatist withdrawal after Eliot, Joyce and Wyndham Lewis exhausted literature's 'repertoire of innovations', to quote Ezra Pound, Borges reflects the fabulist's delight in problematising

language and refusing identification with a single point of view. This makes him a secular mythographer negotiating the slippery terrain between contingent reality and immutable myth. This is the device James Joyce perfected and holds the contingent world and the author's private mythic world in constant tension. The best instance of Borges's method is the so-called intertextuality of Pierre Menard and the Library of Babel. Borges suggests that there is a long chain connecting literary creations in different cultures and that the book, Le Livre of Mallarme, is the sum total of humankind's cultural achievement – an insight which, in spite of Borge's close relation to postmodernism, is contrary to the latter's very foundational ethic. Like Emberto Eco's Name of the Rose, Borge's works—part stories, part essays and part philosophical disquisitions—use libraries, intertextual cross-references and encyclopedias as material and produce teasing puzzles of disenchantment and transgression. He constructs metaphorical relationships or what he calls 'an axis of innumerable relationships' and like Emberto Eco again, has fun parodying and pastiching fictional forms, holding them upside down. As in Thomas Pynhcon's Gravity's Rainbow, Borges chooses to call this kind of art 'baroque' in *A Universal History of Infamy*).

He as well as other writers who question realism's claims to totality, delight in flaunting, in baring the fictional and linguistic systems to the reader's view and creating private mythologies of their own. There is always this feeling in reading Borges that something lies just beyond our ken in his tales, that there is a possibility of meaning but not the need for elucidation, that the writing as well as the world written about are an elaborate and witty spoof. Ultimately Borges is writing about writing (a trait to be inherited by postmodernist writers who are his younger contemporaries) ,about the processes if not the products of his mind, and we are expected to be amused by what reads as often as not like a serious and learned essay on some arcane subject. As the critic David Hayman puts it in his study of the modernist narrative, 'in Borges we discover ourselves reading Borges'. (*Re-Forming the Narrative: Toward a Mechanics of Modernist Fiction*, (New York



1987: 66). Unlike Robbe-Grillet whose writing answers to Jameson's characterisation of depthlessness,Borge's art is the generation of fantastic situations that are simultaneously credible and incredible , what with their extraordinary play on the phantasmagoric, as the story 'Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis , Tertius' amply demonstrates. Unlike Calvino, who inveigles the reader as a character in his book (If on a Winter's Night'), Borges is bent upon forcing non-narrative items such us bibliographies, scientific research and philology in the service of what is essentially an allegorical muse that delights in playing on implausibilities and improbabilities and keeping the reader both involved and detached. Not for nothing does he make such skilful use of popular genres such as detective and spy fiction.

## III

One could go on describing the diversity of trends and tendencies in contemporary writing. One could dwell on how French novelist Georges Perec creates a tour de force in his novel A Void in which he dispenses with the letter E and how in his Le Revenants he uses no other vowel but E. One could also talk about the Irish novelist Sean O'Faolin's At Swim-Two Birds which invokes the primitive myth of Irisnness to enforce contemporary lessons. But I would now like to make a brief reference to what has been called Magic Realism, a technique made common by Latin American writers Marquez, Julio Cortazar and appropriated by Salman Rushdie in Midnight's Children and Satanic Verses. It is not as if the Latin American writers invented the method—our own Panchtantra had been a great storehouse of this technique, but in Latin-American writing magic realism serves the purpose of cultural and political disruption. Besides, it is a mode that scrutinizes the realist conventions of causality, materiality and psychological motivation. Though castigated by the British novelist Julian Barnes in his highly parodic send up of the realist novel in Flaubert's Parrot, magic realism draws upon the collective cultural lore of communities in order to offer an alternative to realism. I would like to briefly mention the Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman's hugely eclectic The Last Song of Manuel Sandero in which there is a revolt of unborn children against the tyranny of Pinochet's dictatorship. It employs reportage,

rhetoric and split narrative structure to subvert the political authority of Chilean fascism, something that the late British novelist, B. S Johnson also does in his 1964 novel Alberto Angelo and the 1973 Christie Marley's Own Double Entry (part of the reason why he remained somewhat neglected in the dominant post-war realist tradition and is only now being revived. (See Tew and White: *Re-Reading B. S. Johnson*, London, Palgrave, 2007).

Like much else, magic realism has its ancestor in the Russian novelist Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* (written in 1937 but published in 1967) as well as in the Walpurgisnacht scene of Goethe's Faust. The alteration of the real and the marvellous that forms the bedrock of magic realism lifts the weirdness of the post-revolutionary reality of Soviet Russia into the biblical times of Pilate and thus creates the parallelism and contrast that means more than what it says. Here is a work that teems with contradictions. In spite of he author's presence as a ventriloquist, the different strands of the story create their own tonality and appeal. The existential and intellectual force of this distortionist imagination is implicit in the grotesque metamorphosis of the story into comedy, farce and even melodrama—incidentally all vehicles of political satire. That Gunther Grass used this technique in the Tin Drum (1959) and Gogol in his 'Nose' and 'Dead Souls' way back in the early 19th century should provide a much-needed corrective to the claims of revolutionary innovation made on behalf of the magic realist writers. The creation of 'enchanted spaces' and geometric patterns bring about plasticity in presentation and make it easier to blur the borders of the real and the fantastic. Whatever the excesses committed in its name, and there are many, it cannot be doubted that magic realism released an unbridled creativity of forms and modes with all their metamorphoses and symbioses on large spatial canvases (as in Carlos Fuentes Terra Nostra) or, in poetry, in the Auguste Manoir episode in Derek Walcott's tantalising autobiographical epic, Another Life (1973). Here the high-toned European beliefs are juxtaposed with the African werewolf myth to account for Manoir's transformation into a dog. Walcott concludes his poem in these words: 'No metaphor, no metamorphosis, /as the charcoal-burner turns/into his door of smoke, /three lives in the imagination, /three loves, art, love, and death, /fade from a mirror clouding with his death, /not one is real, they cannot live or die, /they all exist, they never have existed:'(*Collected Poems*, New York, 1994: 257).



## IV

One of the more innovative tendencies in recent literature has been the assembling of multi-media forms to create a composite whole that either assimilates various media genres or holds them in juxtaposition. In poetry Ted Hughe's Crow with its forceful use of the advertising techniques is conspicuous, even though Joyce used these techniques in the Aeolus episode of Ulysses and Das Passos in the USA trilogy. Salman Rushdie and Angela Carter use media devices such as radio, television, cinema to great effect. As Steven Connor says in relation to Midnight's Children, "The technology of modernity does not simply abolish the old world, but highlights the conflict between the modern and what it supersedes but only partially displaces. What characterises modern media ...is a curious blend within it of the archaic and the modern, in which, far from abolishing the 'myth-life of India, contemporary technology co-operates and furthers it" (*English Novel in History*, p.31). Jean Baudrillard goes even further in speaking of the effects of multi-media revolution. "the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things...the end of interiority and intimacy, the over exposure and transparency of the world which traverses...without obstacle'. (Quoted Connor, p.32). Rushdie's novel mimics the electronic media like television, cinema and the radio that have dissolved identities in today's globalised world. At one stage Saleem Sinai makes explicit reference to his radiophonic consciousness:" for me there can be no going back; I must finish what I have started, even if, inevitably, it turns out to be not what I began...yeh Akashvani hai.This is All-India Radio'(*Midnight's Children*,London,1982:166). This radiophonic consciousness allows Saleem Sinai to reach out to other midnight's children even without making personal contact with them. This also serves Rushdie's purpose of recording dissolving subjectivities –a trait destined for post-modern culture and its social-economic consequences.

The cinema dominates Saleem's conscious and holds him in thrall. Like the boy Toto in the Italian film Cinema Paradiso, Saleem is convinced that 'my life has taken on, yet again the tone of a Bomb ay talkie; but after all,there is only a finite number of methods of achieving reincarnation'(*Midnight's Children*, p.350). In this novel electronic media acquire a mythic dimension ( as in the slides of Picture Singh) along with farce and melodrama, and offers a fabulated version of post-independence Indian history with all the distortions committed in the name of multiple viewpoints made available by the electronic media.

Similarly Angela Carter in her *Passion of New Eve* (1977) presents a fascinated version of the possibilities of m ass cultural devices like the cinema but is equally aghast at what these have wrought. The transformation of the narrator Evelyn at the hands of feminist gorillas is in itself a harrowing picture of the fear of the female even as his later male captor is haunted by the fear of the film star Trustees de St Nag at a showing of her films. There are other instances but these two are representative of the way non-linguistic forms like cinema and the radio have invaded literary works both for their good and for their displacement as primary cultural productions. They fulfil the prophecy of Marshall McLuhan regarding the supplanting of the print culture by non- verbal forms. They also validate Frederic Jameson's foresight that film form, as it penetrates other forms of mass culture, tends to commodify the Word, that sacred icon of the modernist thought. (See Jameson: *Signatures of the Visible*, New York 1988)

## V

Years ago I raised a question: is realism a dead duck. I was writing in the context of Salman Rushdie and the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes and suggested that realism as a humanist practice is too solidly entrenched to be displaced by vacuous experimentation and dismantling zeal of the post-modernist critical theory and practice(*Journal of Hispanic Literature*,1987). My optimism, based as it was on the premise of the power of human agency, is now corroborated by the emerging trends in some significant non – western writing. Far from having jettisoned realism and the belief structure that it entails, some of the most distinguished writers in the Third World have continued to offer historically grounded, plausibly presented sagas of the third world life coming to terms with its own psychological and sociological complexities. History, to the postmodernist theorist as well as writer, is a construct, an edifice that can be manipulated and turned around and does not entail any responsibility or commitment to a point of view. As Jameson suggests in his monumental work, *Postmodernism and the Cultural logic of Late Capitalism* (1992) postmodernism has no use for history, since the triumph of Capital has heralded its end. As a consequence of this, individuals are supposed to live in endless present. For Baudrillard history is a simulacrum, an illusion that is ideologically fostered. Third World countries, recovering from long subjugation to the West's intellectual hegemony, find history as a presence in which their national identities can be discovered. It is in this sense that, according to Jameson, much third world writing is political, though it still remains a debatable assumption.

In some recent Arab fiction, Western postmodernist techniques have found a ready acceptance and have been utilised unquestioningly. In fact Edward Said, in his preface to the Lebanese Elias Khoury's novel, *Little Mountain* (Minneapolis,1989) claims that what he calls, 'a national novel, unconventional and fundamentally post-modern' is the essential genre for war-torn Lebanon'. 'What Khoury finds is...the combinatorial amalgam of different elements, principally autobiography, story, fable, pastiche and self-parody, the whole highlighted by an insistent and eerie nostalgia'. (p. xviii). It is true that novels such as Kanfani's *Men in the Sun* (1976) or Emile Habibi's *The Secret Life of Saeed*, the *Ill-fated Pessoptimist* (1985) do embody postmodernist non-realistic modes and cannot be labelled realistic. But there is also a whole tradition of the Arabic novel, (embodied in Mahfouz, *Tawfik-al-Hakim*, *Abdelrahman Munif* and others) that chooses to engage the social and political realities of the day in the most obviously available fictional mode, that of realism(In this connection, see Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*,

Syracuse,1982, Steffen G. Meyer, The *Experimental Arabic Novel: Post-Colonial Literary Modernism in the Levant*, (Binghamton, NY ,2001) .

As I noted above, there is a strong sense of history in much third world fiction. Thus Quarratulain Hyder's *Aag ka Darya* subjects the entire history of India to a questioning scrutiny in order to gauge its present relevance in the lives of her characters as does Ibrahim Jalees in *Chalees Carod Bhikharee*. My limitations hinder my grasp of India's diverse and rich language literatures in which writers find the classic realist techniques and belief-systems still vibrant and in which the highly ethereal nightmares of post-modernist apocalypse have not intruded. I can, however, discuss some other writers in whose works realism in the sense in which we have understood it is still a distinguishing feature of their writing. These are the writers who still find human struggle for betterment a more worthwhile subject than the lucubrations of deracinated post-modernist avant-garde in the West. These writers, while writing about individual predicaments sketch the contours of national struggles. They register rather dimly on the radars of post-modernist critical cabals, nor are they notable for any breath-taking stylistic acrobatics that would catch the attention of the academic critics in the west. They are still coterie writers in the West, though in their own countries they are widely read.

Naguib Mahfouz is an exception, though His *Cairo Trilogy* evokes comparisons with Proust and Galsworthy and is a rich representation of the evolution of Egypt in the colonial period. His significance as a major realist novelist is that he represents the apogee of the domesticated realist tradition (domesticated because the Arab narrative mode of Hakawati feeds a realistic stream into the novel).It is true that in his later fiction, Miramar in particular, he deviated from his own realistic tradition, but the Trilogy along with Munif's *Cities of Salt* (trns.1994) mark a turning point in Arab realistic narratology.

One could argue that Mahfouz remains central to realism in the non-western novel, but he also yokes together myth and allegory without undermining the historicity of his work. In this respect his



Children of Gabalawi(1981) deserves some extended treatment. Here is a story of corruption, intrigue and violence located in ancient times but quite relevant in the present. In spite of its length and trans-historical provenance, this work is like a medieval woodcut—a spare authoritative narrative line deployed to render grisly scenes of violence and gang warfare, as in the murders of the chief inheritors of the Gabalawi mantle or in the depiction of the successive betrayals of people who set out to do some good to the alley community.

Mahfouz is a storyteller in the sense in which Walter Benjamin understood the term. There is an element of the Dastan (this is also available in Rushdie) that raises its realistic surface to symbolic levels. Combining Koranic traditions and biblical myth, Mahfouz modelled his characters on the human types he had studied so long in their social context. In this way he has achieved two effects: he has brought sublime mythical figures to the level of common human experience, and he has invested the fundamental terms of everyday life with a somewhat archetypal significance. This makes the novel central to the Mahfouz canon.

If the Gabalawi mansion with its languorous garden represents the primeval Eden, then the expulsion of Idris, the oldest of the patriarch's sons, for disobeying his father is an act of transgression to be understood in the book's underlying biblical motifs. If the pervading symbolism of the novel follows a biblical pattern of paradise lost and regained, the overall narrative structure has the inevitability of a tragic plot in the classical sense. Yet the book teems with life, real everyday life, not as in the heated up imagination of Rushdie's fiction. This life continues like a plangent chord on a smaller scale than in Tolstoy's great novel, expressing Mahfouz's faith in our capacity to rise above our fates.

It has been my contention that the post-colonial fiction drawing inspiration from within its own rich cultural lore as well as from what can be called the globalised literature of postmodernism, is constructed in the old epical tradition which negates the very foundation of post-modernist narrative theory. Epic does not simply denote scale and proportion; it also denotes a measure of imagination that is capable of sustaining a wide variety of human behaviour

even if on a small and concentrated canvas. Hardy's Wessex comes to mind, as does Narayan's Malgudi. It is no surprise that poets and minstrels abound in the alley's coffee houses and taverns, singing of the ages gone by and reinventing heroes and their valorous deeds that become exemplary in the moral and spiritual histories of the alley.

Ivo Andric and Promoedya Ananta Toer are two other writers who adopt the epic convention, the convention of the grand narrative despised by Lyotard, to tell the stories of their nations. Andric is Serb who writes in Serbo-Croat and Toer an Indonesian who writes in Bhasa Indonesia. Andric shares with his fellow Slav, Tolstoy, as inexorable and inevitable sense of history as well as his pessimism about the grand gestures of historical personages. Just as the omniscient narrator at the close of War and Peace broods over the futility of heroes manipulating history, so do the community elders in Andric's two masterpieces The Bridge on the Drina and Bosnian Chronicle ruminate over the uselessness of grand Viziers and Counsels imposing their wills on ordinary humanity. In Drina, the changeability of human fortunes in political turmoils is signalled by the 'great flood' in the Drina river and the toll it takes. 'Their town had been into a hell, a devil's dance of incomprehensible works, of smoke, dust, shouts and turmoil', says the narrator. In Chronicle, the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires bring nothing but ruin to the ordinary people of Travnik, falsifying their hopes of alleviation. The other quality Andric shares with Tolstoy is an ability to see history in broad strokes rather than in the miniature. Even though there are occasional expressions of individual assertion, as in Radisav's fatal revolt in Drina or the romantic tumbles of De Fossets in "Chronicle", it is the broad history of conquest that has the upper hand. If Tolstoy sees all individual acts suffused with historical nuance, Andric sees large historical forces dwarfing individual efforts at freedom. Apart from Radisav's abortive revolt, the novel *Bridge on the Drina* records the doomed brief eruptions of Fata (in love), Milan (in gambling) and Fedun (in soldiering) as instances of the power of history to defeat individuals and their aspirations. It would be tempting to read the wonderful Bengali novel 'A River Named Titash' along with Andric's Drina for a comparison of their presentation of nature myths and chronicles.



In Andric, as in Nurudin Farrah's *African Trilogy*, history is an elite business in which common people have no role. It is equally so in Toer's epic *Buru Quartets* (Penguin 1988). Like Andric, Toer is a Communist who suffered both under Soekarno and the military dictatorship of his successors. In the Quartet, Toer presents the story of Minke, the talented, intelligent and sensitive Javanese young man who joins the struggle against the colonial rule. His passion for the Indo-European girl Annelies enables him to embrace the world of his country in all its brutality and anger... Narrated by Toer to his fellow prisoners in Indonesian jails, this extraordinary work projects both humankind's potential for greatness and a large compassion for its follies. This sprawling quartet reads like a recitative, taking in rhythms of common speech and the worldliness of mundane feelings. This complex and colourful story of social and political life in the Dutch East Indies, told in a tone of bruised innocence captures, as no western saga does, the heave and flow of sheer life lived away from the arc lights.

The return of realism, the brilliantly complex imbrication of the social and the personal as well as its techniques of perspective and framing, have released non-western writing from the postmodernist mock-sophistication and avant-gardist gimmickry. It has returned third world fiction to where it truly belongs: at the cross-roads of history and human agency .In this way it has linked it up with epic novels such as Dr Zhivago, Buddenbrooks and other notable works of the Western canon.

# The Promise and Dilemma of *Sea of Poppies*

*Lily Want*

Postcolonialism initiates a qualitative change between the traditional writing of history and history as we know it today and as such the exploration of themes which revisit the past acquire immense popularity and importance. *Sea of Poppies* too as a Postcolonial text engages in a systematic uncovering of the past and assumes special significance in establishing the background of nationalism. Ghosh interacts with the traditional colonial discourse by attempting to modify and subvert it.

Set in 1838 in Amitav Ghosh's native Calcutta, *Sea of Poppies* details the social and political impact of colonial force in general and the British East India Company's lucrative opium trade in particular. When in one of his interviews, Ghosh was asked as to what interested him about the subject matter of *Sea of Poppies*, he remarked that it was his "long interest in ships and sea but then writing about Indian sailors and overseas migrants, he became interested in the flow of opium from India to China." "It was impossible," he said, "to get away from it because opium played such an important part in the economy of colonial India". (Online). In fact, the greatest strength of the book lies in the elaboration of the specific moments of an oppressive Colonial past rendered through the British East India Company's monopoly on the production and export of Indian opium. It affords a new vantage point from which to reinvestigate the company's trading schemes to secure a consumer market for the drug in China by reaching it to the Chinese coast hidden aboard British ships and in the case of *Sea of Poppies* in an American slave ship renovated to smuggle not only opium but indentured labour too. Mr Burnham, the unscrupulous British merchant in the novel justifies the trafficking of this addictive substance in the following words:

> 'Free trade is a right conferred on Man by God, and its principles apply as much to opium as to any other article of trade. More so perhaps, since in its absence many millions of natives would be denied the lasting advantages of British influence....that British rule in India could not be sustained without opium—that is all there is to it, and let us not pretend otherwise. You are no doubt aware that in some years, the Company's annual gains from opium are almost equal to the entire revenue of your own country, the United States? Do you imagine that British rule would be possible in this impoverished land if it were not for this source of wealth? And if we reflect on the benefits that British rule has conferred upon India, does it not follow that opium is this land's greatest blessing? Does it not follow that it is our God-given duty to confer these benefits upon others?'
>
> (Ghosh 2008:115)

Bengal and Bihar are as such shown in *Sea of Poppies* as the opium-growing districts of India with British companies extracting huge profits by smuggling this addictive substance in defiance of the Chinese drug laws. In foregrounding how opium trade remained a key to the East India Company's hold on the subcontinent, Ghosh, however, is not only re-encoding a new historiography but also authenticating historical facts. For example, Britain's Governor-General of India wrote in 1830, "We are taking measures for extending the cultivation of the poppy, with a view to a large increase in the supply of opium". (Online)

Again, Karl Marx in *Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist Vol I*, wrote, "The English East India Company, as is well known, obtained, besides the political rule in India, the exclusive monopoly of the tea-trade, as well as of the Chinese trade in general, and of the transport of goods to and from Europe....The monopolies of

salt, opium, betel and other commodities were inexhaustible mines of wealth". (Online)

However, when asked what triggered the novel, Ghosh replied that it wasn't the opium story but the lives of the indentured workers especially those who left India from the Bihar region. In the light of both these responses, one can easily discern that Ghosh was enquiring into the economic, cultural and psychological conditions of the trading strategies of British colonialism through the opium factory run by the East India Company at Ghazipur. *Sea of Poppies* as such is not only an expose of the debilitating effects of opium smoking on opium like Deeti's husband who while working in the opium factory had become an 'afeemkhor'- an addict but a poignant picture of the horrendous conditions of poverty and deprivation faced by that class of people who were coerced to use fertile lands for the cultivation of poppies rather than the crops that would sustain them:

> 'When Deeti was her daughter's age, things were different: poppies had been a luxury then, grown in small clusters between the fields that bore the main winter crops—wheat, masoor dal and vegetables....But those toothsome winter crops were steadily shrinking in acreage: now the factory's appetite for opium seemed never to be sated. Come the cold weather, the English sahibs would allow little else to be planted; their agents would go from home to home, forcing cash advances on the farmers, making them sign *asami* contracts. It was impossible to say no to them: if you refused they would leave their silver hidden in your house, or throw it through a window.... And, at the end of it your earnings would come to no more that three-and-a-half sicca rupees, just about enough to pay off your advance'.
>
> (Ghosh 29,30)

But then, Ghosh resists glorifying the pre-colonial culture of India when he deals with the state of women within the cultural model of the Indian society. He takes us back to nineteenth century Calcutta and performs a close reading of Sati as proof of conformity to older norms despite the British abolition of widow sacrifice in 1829. *Sea of Poppies,* therefore, is also a re-examination of where and how the voice of the subaltern woman could be given a hearing and allowed to assume mythic proportions of authority. For example, in the opening pages of the novel, Deeti, a poppy farmer's wife hallucinates a tall-masted ship which somehow she realizes is linked to her destiny. Again, where Deeti escapes the ritual of widow self-immolation with a low-caste carter, Kalua and eventually appoints herself the guardian of the single women on board the Ibis, Paulette Lambert, a young Frenchwoman too escapes from her guardian, Ben Burnham's civilizing Christian civility only to be on board the 'Ibis' with Zachary Reid, the second mate of the ship and son of a freed slave. Ghosh, needless to say, in such portrayals is seen demanding a hearing for the despair and determination in woman's voice—the voice of a defiant subalternity committed to writing its own history:

> 'Miss Lambert,' he (Mr Zachery Reid) blurted out suddenly,... 'Miss Lambert, believe me, if I had the means to be a settled man, I would this minute offer to make you...'
>
> Paulette cut him off before he could finish. 'Mr Reid,' she said proudly, 'you are yourself trumping very much if you imagine me to be in search of a husband. I am not a lost kitten, Mr Reid, to be sheltered in a ménage. Indeed I can conceive of no union more contemptible than one in which a man adopts a wife out of pity!'... 'You are mistaken, Mr Reid, if you imagine that I asked you here to seek your protection—' (Ghosh 305)

Again Paulette's feminine identity comes through in the following conversation with Mr Reid:

> 'Yes Mr Reid,' Paulette repeated, 'that is my request to you: to be allowed to join your crew. I will be one of them: my hair will be confined, my clothing will be as

theirs... I am strong... I can work...' '... Of course I don't expect to be an officer, like yourself. What I want is to join as a lascar, like Jodu.' '...With kajal in my eyes, a turban on my head and a lungi around my waist, no one will know me. I will work below deck and never be seen.'(Ghosh 307,308)

Ghosh in *Sea of Poppies* is not only attentive to feminism as a libratory formation but also lays the groundwork for more productive and equitable social relations among women across cultural contexts. By accepting the principle that different groups of women have different and sometimes conflicting interests, Ghosh does away with the politics of inclusion that is governed by the universal representation of all women's interests. That Ghosh pursues the politics of partiality wherein feminism can never ever be an encompassing political home for all women is corroborated by his own response to a question about identity being a strong theme in *Sea of Poppies*: "Personally I'm a bit skeptical of the notion of identity. I don't believe that anyone has just one identity—everyone has several. Certainly every major character in Sea of Poppies does". (Online)

Thus in focusing on historical circumstances and socio-material conditions of colonial India, *Sea of Poppies* proposes alternative critical and reading practices. But then *Sea of Poppies* addresses the changing context of Postcolonialism as Ghosh deals with issues such as hybridity, multiculturalism and multivocality. He draws together a number of disparate characters belonging to different classes, castes, religions, sexes and nationalities. Since language remains the richest area of-invention for Postcolonial writers, Ghosh too in *Sea of Poppies* reinvents the English language but pushes its frontiers to an extreme point. He demonstrates more radical experiments in language as against the earlier Postcolonial experimentation where the language remained in many ways familiar. We come across the most extreme examples of deviation from the conventional literary language. His experiments in syntax, infringements of grammar, manipulation of punctuation and capitalization, lexical innovation, mixing of languages especially



Bhojpuri lead to insurmountable ambiguity demanding work from us, the readers. Throughout one gets a disconnected feel as the internal structure of a sentence is broken and a truly ungrammatical construction is presented:

'I daresays you are trying to put out my legs. How you could forward such a proposal I cannot realize. At once you must scrap it off.'
'But Baboo Nob Kissin,' Paulette beseeched him, 'tell me: what difference will arrive to you if you add one more name to the list ? ... One more will not be remarked...' (Ghosh 338)

Or again:

'It seems that I've been waiting an age. I thought for sure you were off to bake a brinjaul... It would never do to be warming the coorsy when there's kubber like this to be heard....we must sit on the cot,...It's not the kind of thing you want to be gupping about on your feet...' 'But what is it that has arrived, Madame?' said Paulette,...

'You see, Puggly, they had dinner at the Bengal club yesterday and after the'd bucked this and that, Mr Kendalbushe...wanted to ask whether you, dear Puggly, might look favourably upon his suit.'

'Suit?' said Paulette, in confusion. 'But Madame, I cannot say. I have no memory of his costume.' (Ghosh 272,273)

When in an interview, Ghosh was asked to comment on the language/idioms used in the novel, he remarked that "in many ways he feels that English was more open and inclusive in the 19th century than it is now. Asian influences were much more evident then. People in England tend to think that the Hindi/Urdu inflected patois of London is a product of recent immigration. But in fact, Londoners who lived in India in the 18th and 19th centuries also had a Hindi/Urdu patio of their own. Similarly most sailors were fluent in trans-oceanic pidgin languages. Much of this variety was lost when English became standardized in the early 20th century. For him it was a sheer

delight to rediscover this great wealth of words". (Online). Despite the fact that Ghosh is finding a voice from within the historical context of India, *Sea of Poppies* undoubtedly reflects the changing world perspective and cultural climate that has been reflected in the rise and development of Postcolonial novels. That is, it represents the postmodern awareness that different perceptions of reality exist and may be equally valid as the cast of voices found in this novel includes speakers of different languages and the languages of different social classes.

But having said that, the elaborated pidgin language or the trading argot that Ghosh exploits in Sea of Poppies are impossible to read, let alone understand. These linguistic innovations and difficulties place the novel in a category of its own:

> '...Mr Doughty made a bubbling sound, like a kettle coming to the boil.'Just eat the bish, you gudda, 'he hissed at Zachary... Mr Doughty subjected the dish to careful scrutiny. 'Cockup, if I'm not mistaken-and with fuleeta-pups too! Why, sir, your bobachees have done us proud.' ( Ghosh 114).

Or again:

> 'Serang Ali directed a contemptuous jet of spit over the deck rail. 'That bugger blongi too much foolo,' he said. 'Wanchi Sabbi allo foolo thing.'...
>
> 'He ask: Malum Zikri likee milk? Likee ghee? Ever hab stole butter?'...Tapping his knuckles on his head, Serang Ali went on: 'He belongi too muchi sassy bugger.'
>
> 'What'd you tell him?'
>
> 'Told: how-fashion Malum Zikri drinki milk in ship? How can catch cow on sea?...Also he ask-hab Malum ever changi colour?...I say: maski, how-fashion Malum blue can be? He is sahib no? Pink, red, all can do-but blue no can....He too muchi fooli.' (Ghosh 153).



Or again:

> 'What do I think? I'll tell y'Mannikin: I don't think the skipper needs to be jibbering the kibber with yer. If he has to be rowed, then it's best I be the one to do it.'
>
> Zachary shifted his weight uncomfortably. 'Sure. Suit yourself, Mr Crowle. Was just tryin to help.'
>
> 'Help? It's no help to anyone to have yer pitching the gammon to the skipper. Ye'll stay where ye're needed and look sharp about it too....Take y'self aft, Reid,...Don't need yer swilkering about for'ard.'(Ghosh 344)

True that some of Ghosh's blendings involve mixtures of languages—a practice that we are familiar with in postcolonial writers—but then *Sea of Poppies* creates a disturbing effect as it includes made-up words or as it remains peppered with neologisms:

> 'What the hell you you *pesticatin* me for this time o'night?...You go tell that *ponce-shicer* my mast don need no *fiddin.'* (Ghosh 295)
>
> My father too would have *pleasanted*...When he discovered the depths of my ignorance , he was quite *bouleversed* and said to me that it was most imperative that he take personal charge of my instruction,... (Ghosh 297)
>
> I came *all-a-sweet*, as soon as I was told. (Ghosh 271)

Ghosh not only uses bhojpuri words like *loochergiri, burrasize budzat, chuckeroo, cuzzanah, halalcores, udlee-budlee, baka-bihari* without italicizing and translating them but also maintains a selective lexical fidelity to the bhojpuri word when he resorts to code –mixing. A linguistic innovation, code-mixing or loan-blend for Ghosh involves the combination of items from Bhojpuri and English to form new meanings. Here the English items guide the reader to understand the meaning of the Bhojpuri items e.g., "But they've never made a tumasher about it in the past: their

mandarins and chuntocks always got their ten-per-cent desturees and were glad to shut their eyes to it." (Ghosh 113).Here there is an admixture of English and Bhojpuri words. The sentence commences with English and remains interspersed with bhojpuri words even as Ghosh refrains from completely switching to the latter. Although the entire exercise involves a freedom from earlier linguistic and representational conventions that manifests itself in a playfulness not witnessed in prose before yet Ghosh's language is thoroughly problematized.

His attempt to render the words, feelings, idiosyncrasies and behaviour of his characters in a form of English that contains a lot of first-language interference does convey a sense of cultural distinctiveness but it also results in highlighting the degree of competence exhibited by the characters in their usage of English language. It underscores the difference between good and bad English created by colonizers to mark the ability or inability of using the language. It contributes further to the marginalization of the indigenous cultures and mars both international intelligibility and historical and cultural identity. That the genesis of modern India is English-literate India and that writers like Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, Aravind Adiga, Salman Rushdie are products of the developing modernizing and increasingly Global India has been well enunciated by Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things:*

> "...they were all Anglophines—a family that is naturally disposed to adjust themselves to a wholly new cultural and political environment." (Roy 1997:52)

Such Anglophines only end up complicating the parameters of Postcolonial literature when they legitimatize the Eurocentric image of the east in the garb of sly humour. They also draw attention to the contrarian impulses within the parameters of Postcolonial Studies highlighted by Makarand Paranjape in the following words:

> Paradoxically the prerequisite for entrance into the discourse of Post-colonialism was an exit from the condition of Post-coloniality. That is, there were really no post-colonials in the discourse of post-colonialism. Post-colonialism like Orientalism was about privileged people in the West discussing underprivileged people elsewhere. What made this less obvious was that these privileged people were often brown, not white, and from areas that were formerly colonized. (Online).

Writers like Ghosh, in fact, overlook the fact that the Indian educational system legitimatizes the relation of power and knowledge implicated with English unlike the pidgin of African writers like Achebe and Wole Soyinka which is almost the langua franca of Africans without any inherent hierarchy based on correct and incorrect usage of the colonizer's language. As such, Achebe's consciously correct idiomatic language represents an organic evolution of the language culminating in linguistic innovation and creativity but one wonders whether Ghosh's pidgination and code-switching can adequately express native experiences and problems. Paradoxically the Indian monolinguistic allegiance is upheld in the course of *Sea of Poppies* and is reflected in the following conversation between Paulette and Zachary Reid:

> Paulette seized the opportunity to turn her attention back to Zachary: 'But tell me, Mr Reid, how is it that you communicate with your lascars? Do they speak English?'
>
> 'They know the commands,' said Zachary. 'And sometimes, when it's needed, Serang ali translates.'
>
> 'And how do you hold converse with Serang Ali?' Paulette asked.
>
> 'He speaks a little English,' said Zachary. 'We manage to make ourselves understood.' (Ghosh 258)

Needless to say, English serves as a language of social mobility and the linguistic tool for intra/inter societal communication on the ship. In fact, Ghosh while appropriating and reconstituting the English language in *Sea of Poppies* through pidgination and code switching uses it as a means of establishing and maintaining relationships among people of diverse cultures and mother tongues.

Nowhere do the characters from diverse cultures clamour for different identities through the languages and varieties they speak:

> '...From now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be shipsiblings—jahaz-Bhais and jahaz-bahens—to each other. There'll be no difference between us.' (Ghosh 356)

Thus in crossing and recrossing multiple borders of language, race and culture, Ghosh, therefore, disrupts the constraints and absolutism of nationalist boundaries:

> 'As he was raising his hand to his lips, it occurred to him that this was the first time in all his years that he had ever eaten something that was prepared by hands of unknown caste....he was assailed by a nausea so powerful that he could not bring his fingers to his mouth. The intensity of his body's resistance amazed him:for the fact was that he did not believe in caste, or so at least he had said, many, many times, to his friends and anyone else who would listen. If, in answer, they accused him of having become too tash, overly westernized, his retort was always to say, no,his allegiance was to the Buddha, the Mahavira, Shri Chaitanya, Kabir and many others such—all of whom had battled against the boundaries of caste with as much determination as any European revolutionary.' (Ghosh 267)

It would be apt to mention Bharati Mukherjee here who points out how her aesthetic views vis-à-vis identity reformulations were determined by diaspora that involved a movement from unhousement to rehousement—a process that calls for "the breaking away from the culture into which one is born, and in which one's place in society was assured" and "rerooting oneself in a new culture." She argues, "In this age of diasporas one's biological identity may not be one's only identity. Erosions and accretions come with the act of emigration." (Online). Bharati Mukherjee's remarks find resonance in the era of Globalization. Shaped and enhanced by communication technologies, this era generates new frameworks for identification. Far from announcing nation-states as historically redundant, globalization is engaged in a process of redefining nationalism and thereby heralds a combination of nationalism and cosmopolitism. Multiculturalism, hybridization and diaspora lives as the modalities of Globalization provide the site for identity transformations. Paul Gilroy's coinage of 'cultural citizenship' has emerged as an important category of analysis in recent scholarship on identity politics. Cultural citizenship does away with conventional frameworks of national identity that emphasize roots and origins and instead calls up the global dynamic of flows of peoples, cultures, ideas set into motion in an age of diaspora.

When Neel Mukherjee, recipient of the 2008 Vodafone Crossword Book Award for his novel *Past Continuous* was asked that his protagonist is seen treading a different trajectory rather following a different emotional terrain from other migrant novels in his determination and single-mindedness to escape without a sense of nostalgia, he responded in the following words:

> Yes, it was a very deliberate move on my part. I was trying to look at exile as choice, as volitional and sought-out. The garden variety of nostalgia, which is nothing more than spurious, confected sentimentality, has ruined the migrant novel. If you must have nostalgia, there must be new ways of doing it. Aleksandar Hemon, the Bosnian-American writer, for example, looks back on his life in Sarajevo all the time, but he reinvents nostalgia for his purposes to the extent that we need to find another word for the feeling that charges his fiction. (The Hindu 2009: 1)

What is suggested here is the focus on complicated enmeshments of cultures and their intractable nature. Caught between the influence and eventual displacement of his/her past migration history, the migrant emerges in the words of Paul Gilroy 'an intracultural and transnational formation.'

*Sea of Poppies* could be seen as a celebrated example of this new framework of cultural citizenship characterized as it is by flows from minority or subordinate groups like immigrants, women,

members of disadvantaged ethnic groups—A discourse of cultural harmony that attempts to forge equality and national unity out of diversity. The text assembles a motley of members from different ethnic backgrounds and national origins " as if they were all kin now, that their rebirth in the ship's womb had them into a single family." For example, Raja Neel, a bankrupt Indian landowner on board the Ibis to go to his jail across the Black Water for forging an Englishman's signatures; Lei Leong fatt, a Chinese Afeemkhor; Deeti, a poppy farmer's wife but now a widow remarried to Kalua; Kalua, a low caste carter; Zachary Reid, an American sailor; Mr Doughty, a course river pilot; Serang Ali, the chief of the Ibis's Lascar crew; Ben Burnham, an unscrupulous British merchant; Baboo Nob Kissin, Burnham's agent; Captain Chillingworth from Devonshire; Roger Cecil David, the ship-launder known as Rajoo-launder to his shipmates; baboo and Mamdoo, the two tindals; Munia, Sarju and Heeru, single women on board the Ibis; Cassem-meah, Simba Cader, the lascars; Steward Pinto and a large batch of indentured labourers. Despite their disparate cultural histories and social differences, Ghosh's characters explore new ways of belonging and becoming on the Ibis which in the course of the text is described in the following words: "...the Ibis was not a ship like any other; in her inward reality she was a vehicle of transformation, traveling through the mists of illusion towards the elusive, ever-receding landfall that was Truth." (Ghosh 335)

Ghosh, as such, shares Bharati Mukherjee's representation of diaspora as a condition of gain or rehousement in new social, political, cultural and geographical locations. The text explicitly suggests the process of assimilation where different cultural and ethnic communities are conceived as coming together to create a new race sharing a common culture through the characters' interchange of cultures, accents, memories, histories and experiences. This interchange for a harmonious synthesis, needless to say, matches the world of growing migration and diaspora lives, intensive intercultural communication and erosion of boundaries enhanced in the wake of major structural changes like new technologies that further this new phase of intercultural contact.



In the larger context of communication global realities and dissemination of common cultural styles, Gloria Anzaldua's groundbreaking work, *Borderlands* is largely responsible for the shift in Postcolonial discourse from exile and diaspora to borders and the crossing and recrossing of physical, imaginative, linguistic and cultural borders. Bhabha questions the purity of cultures and instead underscores their intermingling. He speaks of 'destaging the past' where "traditional knowledge is not done away with but reinscribed and given unexpected meanings."

As such the choice for Postcolonial writers between the English language and varieties of English or the vernacular tongue need not be an either/or proposition. Arundhati Roy once remarked unequivocally that, 'I love English. It is the skin of my thought' or else one is reminded of what Bhapsi Sidhwa's words:

> "My first language of speech is Gujarati, my second is Urdu, my third is English. But as far as reading and writing goes I can read and write best in English. I'm a tail end product of the Raj. This is the case with a lot of people in India and Pakistan. They're condemned to write in English, but I don't think this is such a bad thing because English is a rich language." (Gaur 2004:206)

Therefore the empire need not resort to linguistic hybridity to such an extent that it remains alien to this idea of cultural and ideological mongeralization. The empire need not to write back as it has sufficiently done so. Postcolonialism needs to be studied in relation to realities of transnationalism, transculturalism and globalization where rights of ownership to English language have been modified. English need not be regarded as a uniquely British monopoly or the centralized hegemonic grand design. Dennis Walder remarks, "Since English is a global language, the first of its kind, it has been modified and domesticated by writers acroos the globe." ( Walder 1998: 84) Although, here Walder is quite explicit that Postcolonial literature celebrates universalism while maintaining diversity yet the global status that he accords to English is constantly bolstered in the present times by images of English that associate it with computers,

technology, the internet, intra/inter societal communication. Therefore Ghosh's attempt to partake of the widespread scholarly interest in the language of postcolonial literature is fraught with problems because English not only remains the language of social mobility in *Sea of Poppies* but a guarantee of upward mobility because of socio-cultural reorientations in the altered world situation.

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# Beyond Postcolonialism: Literature in Transnational Times

***Manju Jaidka***

"For last year's words belong to last year's language and next year's words await another voice."

T.S. Eliot: *Little Gidding*

My paper questions the relevance of postcolonialism today and highlights the need to adopt new tools for critical analysis. In support of my stance I quote from the so-called high priests of postcolonialism and; cite examples from the world of art and letters. I also refer to the unignorable reality of globalization which questions all centre-periphery arguments as well as several other tenets of postcolonial theory. My basic premise is that we have lingered long enough in postcolonial territory and it is time for us to explore greener fields.

For at least three decades now scholars and critics have been grappling with the postcolonial approach to literature, its basic assumptions and its in-built paradoxes. Taken as a chronological epithet, postcolonialism would imply a more or less historical study of literature which treats the fact of colonization as an event in time that one may not ignore while critiquing contemporary art and culture. However, the manner in which the term is used by much half-baked academic criticism, postcoloniality is often treated as the origin or the fountainhead of much literature, culture and art that has emerged in erstwhile colonies - an approach that would imply that the countries in question would probably not have a literature of their own had they not first been in bondage.

Bill Ashcroft, in his introduction to *The Empire Writes Back* (2002: 1) forcefully stated: "More than three quarters of the people living in the world today have their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism." The statement that has some validity, no doubt, but are we not reading too much into it if we make it the beginning and the end of all literary endeavor?

Nayantara Sahgal asks a valid question: "So is the colonial the new Anno Domini from which events are to be everlastingly measured?" (Sahgal 36) Like BC and AD? Before Colonialism and After? In other words, do we make postcolonialism the yardstick of judging all works of art that have been produced in roughly the last half-century and more?

Primarily concerned with the distribution of power, and relationships of domination and submission, it cannot be denied that postcolonialism (like so many other -isms) never did have a unified voice, no clear-cut well-defined formulation of its beliefs. The reactions it has invoked since its inception have ranged from the overwhelming support of deeply committed aficionados - who generally remained oblivious of its inconsistencies and paradoxes - to equally impassioned critics who questioned the very basis on which it rested. In between the two categories there have been fence-sitters and critics of the cautious type who would like to judiciously pick and choose the useful and the relevant while ignoring the rest. (I would like to include myself in this third category.

## II

I have no personal grudge against the postcolonial approach or its practitioners. I have no doubt that they have made useful contribution to literary criticism and discovered new entry points into what was earlier terra incognita. No literary critic can refute the significance of concepts propounded by Edward Said or Homi Bhabha. However, many of the concerns of postcolonialism seem to have lost their urgency now, so much so that they almost seem irrelevant. Take the issue of hybridity, for instance, or diaspora. The concept of hybridity, as Neil Lazarus stated in 2004, the whole notion has undergone a change because of the mingling of different racial categories and



the resultant pluralism in all social structures. Hybridity has now become a "progressive term" with new connotations. (Lazarus 255) The movement of large chunks of population—by choice or under compulsion—and the questioning of identity, or the state of being marginalized in an alien culture are, no doubt, valid issues that critics have focused on but the point I wish to make is that we now need to move on. Back in 1999, Gayatri Spivak had revised her notions on diaspora and exile, realizing that "diaspora becomes a kind of alibi" and not a genuine concern with those at the receiving end of global capitalism." (361) Postcolonial discourse has generally been championed by intellectuals who, while relocating themselves in the west, have gone up the social and professional ladder, adopted western critical tools and generally tried to pass off as mainstream. Let us face it, 'poco' has generally been a convenient, opportunistic tool in the hands of a few who "are not so much victims as beneficiaries." (Huggan 353) Earlier, in 1996, Arjun Appadurai realized that the world is changing and in this rapidly transforming world we need new parameters: "the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models" (Appadurai 32).

So, what is the solution? Looking for an answer, I would like refer to John Berger's essay entitled "Against the Great Defeat of the World" where he talks about the world being broken up into jagged pieces of glass—pieces that do not fit into a single coherent whole, pieces that will never fit together to make any sense. In such a fragmented scenario Berger is of the opinion that "it is necessary to build a new world, a world capable of combining all worlds." (Berger xv) in other words, join the pieces together to form a new whole.

Ania Loomba in 2005 agreed that we can no longer see the world as simply postcolonial: "Globalization...cannot be analyzed using concepts like margins and centers so central to postcolonial studies," [What matters today is] "transnational networks, regional and international flows and the dissolution of geographical and cultural borders, paradigms which are familiar to postcolonial critics

but which are now invoked to suggest a radical break with the narratives of colonization and anti-colonialism." (Loomba 213)

Similarly, Frank Schulze-Engler tells us that "On the one hand, postcolonialism has branched out into so many disciplines that many postcolonial debates today seem increasingly irrelevant to literary studies; on the other, some of the chief tenets of postcolonial theory developed in the last two decades now seem hard to reconcile with the literary and cultural dynamic of a rapidly globalizing world." (Eckstein 20). These diverse voices seem to point in a single direction - that the world has changed and we need to change accordingly. So what do we do?

About two hundred years ago, Johann Wolfgang Goethe put forward his concept of *Weltliteratur*: "Nowadays, national literature doesn't mean much: the age of world literature is beginning, and everybody should contribute to hasten its advent." This was Goethe way back in 1827. In 1849, Karl Marx and Engels could look ahead and prophesy: "The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature."

The suggested shift of focus from the postcolonial to global parameters does not necessarily mean that we should now ignore cultural movements or configurations of power across the globe and focus solely on connections and cross-connections in the cross-flow of population and ideas across international borders. In literary studies the change of focus would entail the analysis of texts against a wider backdrop, regardless of chronotopic borders, relating it to cultures distanced in time and space, whether they are postcolonial; or otherwise, master or slave or liberated.

Thomas L. Friedman, in his celebrated book *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* recounts how Nandan Nilekani told him some years ago that "the global economic playing field is being leveled" — a statement that influenced him so much that it triggered off thoughts on the changes brought about by the new global economy, making him realize that globalization has "leveled competitive playing fields between industrial and emerging market countries." (?) Among the ten "flatteners" he lists the internet, the web, uploading, outsourcing, insourcing, etc, all factors which have produced the "dotcom boom" and the "wired world". In such a tightly connected world what is important is not simply the distribution of political power between the colonizer and the colonized but the collective struggle for economic and technological progress in which nations across the world are engaged. The site of struggle thus undergoes a change and it seems passé to talk about the impact of colonization, or about diaspora, margins and centers. This is a time when the dotcom impact is the most important phenomenon governing contemporary life, a time when the diasporic writer has no legitimate reason for indulging his angst as he is in constant touch, through the clicking of his mouse, with homelands, imagined and real. Globalization, as Friedman tells us, has "accidentally made Beijing, Bangalore and Bethesda next-door neighbors."

## III

So, from narratives of colonialism we now may move to narratives of globalization. In their anthology entitled *The Postcolonial and the Global* [Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007] Revathy Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley bring together leading postcolonial critics (including Arjun Appadurai, Timothy Brennan, Pheng Cheah, Inderpal Grewal, Walter Mignolo, R. Radhakrishnan, and Saskia Sassen) who argue that although the postcolonial and the global use a shared critical vocabulary and grammar, there are differences in approach and postcolonialism can no longer ignore global issues. Inderpal Grewal, for instance, suggests a possible revival of "cosmopolitanism" which, incidentally, is close to the Indian philosophy of "Vasudeva kuttumbakam", i.e., the world is my home or the whole world is one single family. It is also akin to the African notion of 'ubuntu' which, as explained by Nelson Mandela, refers to an open society (as against a small, enclosed one) and relates to the essence of being human and working for the benefit of a larger community. Literature in this transformed world

reflects this broader concern. The postcolonial novel that we know today has changed: from being simply a "national allegory" (Fredric Jameson) it has cut across boundaries and gone global. "Does the contemporary postcolonial novel inform a new cosmopolitanism?" asks a recent issue of *Culture-History-Globalization* (5:2009)

I would like to cite a few examples here from contemporary India to endorse my view that it is no longer possible to study literature in isolation from the world outside its national boundaries. In most of our contemporary novels there is a deliberate attempt to forge a connection between diverse communities, peoples and races, and link different geographical and cultural locales. The novel has thus gone hybrid and —very much like the characters it portrays— cannot be confined to its birthplace or the birthplace of its creator. Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar, the Clown* may be a story that has its roots in Kashmir but it moves out of the Valley, cuts across time and space, relocating itself in the USA, changes the tenor of its characters, their lifestyle and traditions, completes a full circle before it returns to its starting point in Srinagar. The tale that is narrated is as much at home in Srinagar as in California. Shashi Tharoor in *The Elephant, The Tiger And The Cellphone: Reflections On India In The Twenty-first Century* tells us how he visualizes India morphing from a somnolent elephant into an aggressive tiger despite the pockets of poverty and neglect that still continue to dot the scene. India is forging ahead as a world power and it is time we stopped viewing it as merely the survivor of a prolonged colonial encounter. In other words, our perspective needs to shift from the postcolonial to the global (Note how many of the Indian novels today have been written outside India —Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, et al).

While on the subject of tigers, it is hard to overlook Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* which narrates the story of the upwardly mobile Salram Halwai who begins from a socially underprivileged section of society but rises from the seamy underbelly of India to carve a niche for himself in a rapidly changing .economy. In this rags-to-riches story the protagonist, based for the most part in Bangalore, narrates his story in the epistolary technique through letters written to none other than Wen Jiabao, the premier of China. Bangalore and Beijing are thus brought on the same platform— or rather, to use Thomas Friedman's favorite metaphor, on the same playing field. Friedman's flatteners converged around the year 2000, and "created a flat world: a global, web-enabled platform for multiple forms of sharing knowledge and work, irrespective of time, distance, geography and increasingly, language." Once the world became flat, there emerged three major economies—India, China and the former Soviet Union —and "three billion people who were out of the game, walked onto the playing field." The margins thus not only shift to the centre but also invite other players who have long been waiting in the wings to come on to the field - players like Balram Halwai who becomes the eponymous white tiger of Adiga's novel. In similar fashion, as Friedman tells us, there is every chance that Bhavya in Bangalore will read your next x-ray, or when you wish to fly next, "Grandma Betty in her bathrobe" will make your Jet Blue plane reservation from her Salt Lake City home. Everyone, regardless of their earlier status, seems to be eager to jump on to the playing field.

We may also take a look at the Indian contribution to the world of cinema and how it would not be fair to dub it as simply postcolonial when, clearly, a transnational effort goes into each successful film)Take *Siumdoq Millionaire*, for instance. Its initial appearance as Vikas Sarup's novel, *Q & A* , is very Indian, focusing on the underprivileged in the slums of Mumbai. The squalor and filth presented in the book is just what the western world loves to associate with India. But, at the same time, the story has other than local dimensions in that it cuts across time and space, and can be related to the numerous rags-to-riches stories one reads about in almost all cultures, Indian or western. Moreover, the ladder used for climbing up— "Kaun Banega Crorepati", which is a rip-off from its western counterpart, the UK reality game show, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire"—is that which connects two different worlds— on the one hand that of the underprivileged with the privileged, and on the other the postcolonial with the erstwhile colonizing powee the *desi* with the *videshi*. When adapted on-screen, the *desi* or the

postcolonial story further undergoes a transformation, becoming a very western film in the hands of Danny Boyle. Marketing it in the right package is extremely important and Danny Boyle knows the ropes, so he gives the western audience something that meets its expectations: "Here are the slums of India," the film seems to declare, "Look here, you privileged first world denizens, here is the third world with its horrifying poverty and dirt!" The film fits the bill and is an instant hit at the Oscars and we, in India congratulate ourselves that we have the best slums in the world and go overboard singing 'Jai Ho!'

Let me pose a question—Is the film a postcolonial film or a global film? Is it national or transnational? My point is that the borderline between the postcolonial and the global is not as defined as we were made to believe two decades ago. In a world of rapidly disappearing borders roots give way to shoots and roads are replaced by crossroads. A tale written in India, adopted by an Englishman, lauded by critics of world cinema is a good example of transnationalism and transculturalism. Other such examples may be cited. Deepa Mehta, for instance, who is of Indian origin, lives in Canada, makes films on Indian themes as well as Indo-Canadian encounters. Or one may look at Meera Nair and Gurinder Chadha whose cinematic attempts again juxtapose the western scenario with the Indian. Deepti Naval, Manoj Night Shyamalan and Shekhar Kapoor are again names of film directors who have made cross-over films that blur the difference between the national and the transnational. (My examples are deliberately chosen from India.) Whereas postcolonialism has actually retained binaries by defining them clearly with its rhetoric of 'otherness', a transnational, global approach is more in tune with reality and sees art and literature as fluid, merging, dismantling binaries, intermingling, across national borders and other man-made barriers. Harish Trivedi, in his essay "From Bollywood to Hollywood," speaks of the globalizion of Hindi Cinema and highlights its hybrid aspects. (Goldberg 2002) With its liberal borrowing from Hollywood, its Hinglish and its musical scores (many of them plagiarized) that are much appreciated across the globe, Bollywood has passed from the local into the global, just like Indian writing in English has finally found a niche in world literature. Often, the term "glocal" is used as a portmanteau to describe the synthesis between the two spheres.

Among the forces that erase differences, one may place MTV at the top of the list but Friedman sees the Big Mac as a great binder, symbolic of strong economic ties between countries of the world. In his 1999 book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, he says: "No two countries that both had McDonald;s had fought a war against each other since each got its McDonald's". This may seem an exaggeration but it is close to a thought expressed by O. V. Vijayan who, in 1997, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence, talked about the cultural invasion from the west radically re-shaping the quality of our lives. He spoke of war-heads being replaced by MacDonalds as effective tools in cultural wars:

> "Look out and what do we see? A loud-mouthed cretin comes to the silos where nuclear warheads are kept in semi-slumber. The cretin calls out to them, "I have come to wake you. Do you know who I am?"
>
> The warheads waddle out of their sleep. They say, "Our master." "What else?"
>
> "You are the Big Mac."
>
> The Big Mac, like the internet, like cable TV, is one big binding factor."

To conclude, I reiterate that from a postcolonial stage we are now entering a post--dotcom stage, a globalized platform where transnational, transcultural issues are more important than the postcolonial; where, on a flat world, under the glow of cyber-powered neon lights we playa ball game with none but ourselves as referees. One wrong move and we are edged off the court but the game will still go on with other players. In order to remain on the playing field we need to get real, change our critical apparatus and upgrade our tools. "For last year's words belong to last year's language and next year's words await another voice."

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# From Roots to Routes: Story of Indo-Mauritius Diaspora

*Harish Narang*
*Charu Sharma*

An empty line of twenty-four rooms:
Eight feet by twelve feet.
Once it housed native workers
Eight died: others fled
Who would live among the dead?
Homeless I had come in search of paradise
This house of hell was now all mine.

-Satendra Nandan ("Lines Across Black Waters")

This is the story of Indian indentured labour since 1834. 19th c. overseas migration to King Sugar Colonies was an offshoot of colonialism. Colonial governments and planters did not promote the recruitment of indigenous people and after the prohibition of African slavery, India became the main alternate source of labour. Migration from India to Mauritius, South Africa, Trinidad and Fiji at the time of European colonialism was due to certain social and economic push factors, of which the primary ones remained –poverty, low level industrial opportunities, lack of basic amenities in far flung remote villages, drought and famine stricken areas (genuine or created), and the fear to exercise right on one's own land. Population from these areas were allured by the comforts of a life in sparsely populated far off places. The only qualification required was physical fitness and experience of agricultural work. Families never migrated. Usually individuals and that too in the initial years only the males shifted, later females too started migrating. Life in colonies was hard and isolated and indenture was a long exile where working hours were extensive and wages remained unchanged for years. Any contact with outside world was through the plantation manager, magistrate, police and immigration department. Let us recall that indenture was a contrast by which the emigrants agreed to work for a given employer for a period of 5 years for a specified wage. The other name for Indenture Agreement was the 'girmit', which placed the workers under complete control of their employers. At the end of 5 years, the emigrant could either reindenture or work elsewhere. [The Contract was governed by an Immigration Ordinance.] Sometimes the emigrants moved into villages and towns for living, dependent on subsistence farming with wage labour. From India most of the unskilled labourers migrated from UP, Bihar and Tamil Nadu, whereas Bombay, Sind and Gujrat were the feeding areas for small scale entrepreneurs.

> ...starting from 1835 to 1920, moving in successive waves of indentured labourers 1.5 million, poured into the plantation colonies of Mauritius (453,063), Reunion, Trinidad (143,943), Guyana (238,979), South Africa, Kenya, Surinam and Fiji (60,000). The result is that Indians formed majority only in Mauritius .... The labour diaspora was generally followed by free immigrants, mainly Sindhi and Gujrati traders and jewellers. (Mulloo: 17)

Interaction between indentured immigrants living in barracks evolved a bond of brotherhood, relocated cultural kinship and redefined the boundaries of native homeland. Displaced from roots - homeland/native place, and replanted and resettled in a new land was the story of all demographically dislocated people. The shift from parent nation to expatriate home carried the history of struggles and challenges, problems and solutions, desperation and hope. The

'routes' i.e. the journeys on ships augmented the concept of 'jahazi-bhai'. With the start of lengthy sea voyages began the remaking of cultural and ethnic identities. Thus the ship became first cultural site where social relations were negotiated. On the routes travelled culture. This diasporic community who moved from 'roots' to 'routes', witnessed a beginning of a new chapter in the history of Mauritius on 12th March 1968- the magic date on which Mauritius gained independence. The day brought hopes for the people and the date divided the times in colonial and neocolonial for which post-colonial is only a euphemism.

> Since independence in 1968, Mauritius has been ruled by PIO Prime Ministers, including Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the Father of the Nation (1968-82), Sir Anerood Jugnauth (1982-95, 2000-2003), Dr Navin Ramgoolam (1995-2000). (Mulloo: 98)

The past progresses into the present; unequal power-equations worsen the sense of freedom; from dictatorship to democracy, the neo-colonial set up retards growth because the practices are those of erstwhile colonizers. Progress is clogged. To put in Foucault's words it is 'the shift from a criminality of blood to a criminality of fraud." The change of attitude is a whole complex mechanism- as it is the mechanism of power that frames the everyday lives of individuals. Thus, the paper is about Indo-Mauritius diaspora. The first part of the paper deals with the tales of indentured labour, history of the girmityas and the adaptation of the Indian culture for survival. The second part of the paper deals with the stories that highlight the plethora of day-to-day problems in the lives of common people. The package of problems and challenges is similar to any country of the Third World Order.

The stories are narratives of emancipation, integration and enlightenment. The stories taken up for peruse are from Kamal Kishore Goenka's selected and edited book *Mauritious ki Hindi Kahaniyan* published in 2000 by Sahitya Akademi. It is one of the first compilations where writings of diasporic writers writing in Hindi, belonging to Indo-Mauritius community figure collectively.



Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote: "The call for rediscovery and resumption of our language is a call for a regenerative reconnection with the millions of revolutionary tongues . . ." How true! Indentured labour community remained alive in adverse circumstances through their culture, their identity markers like language, religion, literature, rituals and customs and myths, which gave them the strength to cope up with the inhuman treatment meted out and the will to live in uncongenial atmosphere.

> The racist white planters, ex-slave owners, exploited the labour of the Indians as if they were slaves . . . .
>
> They imposed starving wages which remained fixed over a century, harsh laws which restricted the liberty and movement of the Indians who were subjected to fines, arrests, imprisonment against which they had no appeal so that Indians were maintained in a state of poverty, illiteracy, humiliation and terrorism . . . .
>
> In such moments of despondency, they were saved by their very Indianness which instilled in them a bundle of moral values, thrift, courage, resilience, hard work, attachment to their family values and the will to succeed. (Mulloo: 107-08)

The core values helped them to stick together through thick and thin, and provided them strong ethnic identity, mutual co-operation and ability to share ideas, information and values. Their cultural baggage was their survival kit. The migrants developed a diaspora consciousness and they wanted to retain links with homeland so that they were rooted in their culture.

> Mauritius offers the spectacle of a harmonius multicultural society. Indians have preserved their cultural heritage, their languages, including the teaching of Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Urdu in the schools, thanks to its nearness to India. (Mulloo: 96)

Mauritius is dominated by Hindi speaking diasporic community and therefore Hindi and Bhojpuri are the languages of communication between people. Linguistic homogeneity became a unifying factor. Hindi speaking gave impetus to Hindi literature and the growth of Hindi stories started way back in 1926. Present time literature also known as the Modern Period began in 1960. Prior to this, most of the writers used pen names to raise their voice. Either the stories were not published as they were narrations of true incidents or if published the writers were harassed for drawing attention of the masses to the issues of concern.

"Bharat mata ki jai [Hail India]

Hindu dharm ki jai [Hail Hindu religion]

Hindu sanskriti ki jai [Hail Hindu culture]

Hindi bhasha ki jai" [Hail Hindi language]

are lines from Deepchand Beeharry's story "Guruji", which reveals the importance of Hindi language and Indian/ Hindu culture for these diasporic communities who collectively identify with each other as Indians/Hindus irrespective of region or religion. Beeharry explicitly writes about the 100 year old saga of girmitya labour who were displaced from their country to work on sugar cane plantations; who were told that under each stone was gold and they left no stone unturned just to their story of exploitation written by sugar barons.

> Girmit was slavery by another name, nothing more, nothing less. The indentured labourers themselves were gullible simpletons from impoverished rural backgrounds, hoodwinked into migrating by unscrupulous recruiters (arkatis), and brutalized by the unrelenting pace of work on the plantations, their sufferings ignored, their women molested by the overseers and *sirdars* (Indian foremen), their families separated, their dignity in tatters. (Brij V.Lal: 4)

White industrialists and their brown stooges forced the released indentured labour to stay back. The rulers never let the traditions



and customs of these labourers to flower and the people had to undergo many struggles to keep intact their language and culture. Dhirender the central character of the story- *Guruji*- sermonizes that "far away from India they have only one thing to be proud of and that is their being Indians, their language. The Whites, the colonizers might be owners of the land, but not their Hindu culture/ Hindi language." For him language is like a woman and any kind of attack on the language was like molestation of a woman.

Brij Lal Ramdin's story "Navjagran" also brings to limelight the pitiable conditions of the labour class who would sleep on gunny sacks, work even when health was deteriorating and bear the blows of the masters silently. Suffering and pain was an integral part of the daily whip-and-chain living. But commendable is their bonding, where they are ready to fight and struggle for their Indian brothers. The story reflects as to how the emancipation movement gained momentum by integration, not only against the injustice and exploitation but also against cultural colonization. The diasporic community in Mauritius (Fiji/Trinidad/Surinam) has given a befitting reply to cultural imperialists. They realized that their survival was dependent on survival of their culture. People were inspired by the lectures of Gandhiji who had visited the country on 29th Oct 1901.

[Goolam Mohamed Issac, the pioneer and cloth merchant at Corderie Street, Port Louis, played host to M K Gandhi in 1901. (Mulloo: 155)].

Formalized religion through bhajans and kirtans flourished as it was a means to organize and orient their lives. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* acquired a new significance in the immigrants socio-cultural religious life. The scriptures gave them spiritual sustenance and social bonding.

Dimalala Mohit's story "Privaet ki Lakdi" is another story that narrates as to how the Indian labourers travelled to Mauritius to live a comfortable life but became slaves, were mercilessly beaten up by canes made out of a wood called *Privaet*. Ironically, a part of this indentured labour community was involved in the cutting and felling of logs of the trees from which these thin fine canes were

made. The logs were brought to the plantation sites from the forests, where they were cut and sculpted to beat the rest of fellow brothers, who would at times die to continuous beating. The story ends on a positive note where the woman – Mrs Niranjan suggests that pieces of similar wood be taken home from the forest to be burnt in the holy fire while performing *yajna* so that the departed souls are at peace.

Abhimanyu Unnuth, a landmark writer is the Prem Chand of Mauritius. His story "Woh Beech ka Aadmi" is the story of struggle of a small farmer, Ramcharitar. He wants to save his ancestral land from going into the hands of the neocolonial government. In the story we witness as to how in independent Mauritius powerless, poor people are exploited by their own people. About fifty years ago, Ramcharitar's ancestors had emptied all their savings in buying a plot of land, and therefore the land is not just a place where he has a house, but it's his identity, it's a memorial for him who worked as labourers. With great difficulty they had been able to carve a niche for themselves in the new land which was not new any more. "It had been the dream of every Indian immigrant to buy a plot of land and to build a house of their own to rear their family so that they could live in comparative freedom according to their customs and traditions. This dream had been made possible thanks to the system of morcellement which had started in 1865, triggered by the process of centralization of sugar estates leading to the selling of the remote and inaccessible lands, mainly on hills and mountains, to labourers" (Mulloo:177). Ramcharitar a literate, influenced by Prem Chand's *Godan* feels that produce and returns, benefits and profits were the due of the labour as well and they should have an equal right over them. He identifies himself with Hori. Though Ramcharitar has learnt to compromise with the woes of life that a small, insignificant peasant has to undergo - be it food, work load, wages etc, yet he's unable to compromise on the issue of the ancestral land to which he relates his identity. It's not easy for him to compromise with the new rulers; to part with the ancestral land for the upcoming airport (development), to see the "Iron-Demon" ("Lohe ke Daitay") bulldoze the memorial within minutes.



Here is a person who was once displaced from native land, and is displaced another time in the settled land as well. In this story the predicament of people in colonial and neocolonial times are well juxtaposed.

In almost all the stories we read the fear psychology in girmityas and their progeny and the consequences of internalization of exploitation. Simultaneously, the rebellion, the urge to retaliate is well portrayed. Abhimanyu Unnuth's another story "Tuuta Pahiya" (Broken Wheel) highlights the plight of the older generation and their value system in a new, liberated Mauritius. The opening sentence of the story is "it was the 10th anniversary of country's independence". The story delineates the history of the country in simple, curt sentences. Yusuf, the protagonist is the last man to have a horse cart in the area. He had earned his living by being a cart man. He had even declined an old age pension being given by the government. Gradually he had left reading the newspaper because journalism was all petty politics – same people, same speeches, repeated advertisements and scoops. There was sensational news, nothing new. It was a mundane affair. Streets appeared monotonous – posters with half clad women, strikes, discotheques and youngsters, loud blaring music, porn literature, unisex apparels, etc. This was the new neocolonial land. Yusuf's full name was Yusuf Ramjit. He is symbolic of the Hindu and Muslim fraternity. Hindus and Muslims had travelled together on the same ships – they were 'jahazi – bhais'; they lived together in the same barracks, were beaten up equally, faced the same hardships and therefore their religion was of bonding, humanity and brotherhood.

Abhimanyu's story "*Asvikaar*" also highlights a neocolonial Mauritius where freedom of press is curbed, tourism industry is booming, hotels are mushrooming, inflation is increasing, unemployment is on rise, queues for basic necessities, fraud and corruption. It's a statement on the system which is ruining the country. He rightly says: "Apne Desh mein Ajnabi" (stranger in one's own country).

People had sacrificed their ancestors, who had suffered, whose families had a painful living, had never imagined that an

entirely new, different nation was breeding round the corner. Before 12th March 1968, the people of Mauritius had dreams of a free, democratic, liberated country which would suffice their basic necessities and make other amenities within their reach and not a country where their children would either suffer or lose their basic values.

A story that brings forth the clear picture of neocolonial times is "Dishayen' (Directions) by Ramdev Dhurender. The writer has an unnamed girl protagonist whose date-of-birth is 12th March 1968. This school going girl is a victim of neocolonial Mauritius. For the first time when the narrator sights the girl, in the garden where he works, feels contented that innocent school children, untouched by the big-bad material world, were there to enjoy the freedom of life and nature. But gradually as the story unfolds, the narrator and the reader observe that the picture of new generation portrayed by this girl and the two boys accompanying her is beyond imagination. The picture of impact of modern times on these gullible children who are experimenting their hands on smoking, touching each other, cheating, telling lies is dismal. The girl reveals that her parents are separated and would soon be divorced. She lived with both of them, as it was convenient for her according to the situation and time; but her love for them was like a pendulum which shifted with the amount of money they doled out. And if she did not find comfort at either of the places then she escaped to her grandmother's house. Thus, the picture is of disintegrating relationships.

Two more stories which highlight the disintegrating relationships are "Girmitya Mazdoor" by Bhanumati Nagdaan and "Mamta ka Saaya" by Mohanlal Brij Mohan. The first story is about a sixty-eight year old woman, grandmother of two children who exists a life worse than the girmityas of pre-colonial times. The story opens with the abuses of people being hurled at her: " Are you blind? Do you want to die? Can't you stay at home?" and ends with her collapse on the road. She is a woman who'd silently look after the house of her children–cleaning, cooking, washing, rearing grandchildren and the usual household chores, and at the same time listen to the constant nagging f her daughter-in-law. She had often



asked her son to leave her back home, but he too was selfish. If the mother left, who would perform the duties of the maid; who would look after the house and children. She lived a life of misery. The pension she received was taken away to pay water and electricity bills. The couple wanted to be millionaire overnight. Stung by the adder of consumerism their only hobby was shopping. Despite money and materialistic goods, they were unable to enjoy the pleasures of a comfortable life. They were victims of a race where the whole social-system – country, society, family, home, values like love, sacrifice, sharing and emotions all suffered.

Similarly in the story "Mamta ka Saaya", the gap between modern city culture and traditional rural system is effectively presented through Ritesh and Raakhi. Raakhi simply abhors adjusting to village life where she stays with her mother-in-law for her comfort i.e. to save house rent and her compulsion to usurp and own the piece of land. The hope for the plot made the new era couple think of the mother after eight years. By the time the story concludes, the mother leaves her own house to go to an old age home – *ashram*. The sorry state of affairs in families is due to high standards of living, unlimited desires, and meager income. This becomes a perpetual reason for unhappiness, division in families and disintegrating value system.

Jaidoot Jeut's story "Girvi Rakhi Aatma", Munishwarlal Chintamani's "Maut ka Saudagar" and Biwi Saheba Farzal's "Bebaasi" are stories which pinpoint vital issues of unemployment, corruption, drugs and prostitution respectively. These vices are the fruits of neocolonial order. Colonialism depletes resources and erodes the basic amenities- jobs, health facilities, housing giving way to a new order of "greasing palms", compromise and soul mortgage, etc. Women are worse sufferers. Poor girls are hired as maids, later drugged, raped and forced into prostitution. Women from Mauritius are sent to Gulf countries to work in night clubs as is evident in Farzali's story.

Women exploitation is apparent in Dharmanand Bhantu's "Sahib ki Patni" where the woman narrates her somber tale of being stigmatized as an unwedded mother. These women remain outside

the folds of respectability and security for no fault of theirs.

The question of identity is well portrayed in Anita Ojaib's story – "Main Kaun Hoon". The children of these exploited women are confused as an identity crisis builds up within them regarding their name, religion, language, culture, etc. Mixing of castes and people does not mean hybridity alone, but it also questions the whole notion of diasporic cultural identity. Remaking of cultural and ethnic identities continues to permeate all aspects. To put it in Said's words: "Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale."

The creativity of these writers is rooted in social commitment. They are ambassadors of their country's history, culture and writings. Through literature and that too in Hindi they highlight the importance of language both as individuals and as a community. The long history of Indo-Mauritius diaspora which started with girmityas grows with the fact that they carry their baggage of rituals, customs, traditions and values. Uprooted from homeland, settled in new lands, bearing a double consciousness, yet successful in building a new home (even ruling the nation) is the story of common people.

These writings may not be aesthetic, propounding the *la art pour la art* but they definitely reflect the political and ideological stance of the masses. The stories are intensely politically charged narrations. The personal is political. The anti-imperialistic stance of the people and their concerns for and sympathies with the deprived, oppressed and exploited section of society are well written in these short stories.

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# Teaching Language Through Literary Devices:

## A diagnostic study on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language


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**Introduction**

English teaching today has evolved around the primary emphasis on its viability as a communication skill to help acquire jobs, promote business interests or provide various forms of entertainments. Another perspective that strengthens the argument of the advocates of teaching English without any affiliation with its literature, borders on the fact that the world today needs English for Special Purposes – for the understanding of scientific or technical vocabulary specific to different subjects of interest to the learners.

The decline in the standard of English has been commonly attributed to the teaching methods as used and adopted by language teachers. Our main concern as teachers and teacher trainers is not to teach about language, but to develop learners' abilities to make them capable of using the language for a variety of communicative purposes. There is a difference between teaching about the language and communicating in the language. One great problem is that many teachers believe that teaching about the language in itself will make the learners capable of using the language for communication. In fact, there is often 'a great ability gap' between having information and being able to use it spontaneously for communicative purposes.

There is, as has been noted earlier, a great gap between knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge in terms of communication and the manipulation of that communication. In order to bridge this gap and frame a relevant syllabus its contents should be made to bear a resemblance to the social contexts. This awareness of the social context can be obtained from the world of literature where various facets of society are exposed in all their hues and colors in a language as varied as it is authentic and natural. It is here that the learner might encounter his real world outside the classrooms. The syllabus should include verbal and non-verbal communication, short narratives, short stories, dialogues, conversations, and interviews. These short literary texts will, thus:

- help teachers first to acquaint themselves with language use to develop their own competence and understand language as a social phenomenon, and not as an exclusive branch of learning.
- transform the classrooms as the stage in which there is real practice of communicative language.
- help teachers to consider language as entailing social acceptability; in other words, they can look to classroom language as carrying resemblance with the outside language. As a result, this would raise communication to the level of a social responsibility.
- develop the intellectual ability of the learners and expose them to a variety of linguistic and literary expressions and communicative functions of language.
- contextualize the language to help the learner to acquire grammar implicitly.
- incorporate linguistic competence into communicative competence by putting language into use in different social situations.

**Hypothesis of the study**

The present paper underscores the need and importance of literary texts for a comprehensive attainment of higher levels of language skills. It is based on the primary assumption that teaching literature or literary texts makes language acquisition more use-focused instead of form-focused. Learning literature creates many positive attitudes in learning and acquisition of English as a foreign or second language. This paper tries to touch the benefits of the inclusion of literature or literary texts in EFL curriculum at all the stages of language learning in general and at the primary stage in particular.

Literary texts take into account the functions of language in different realistic situations outside the conditioned atmosphere of the classrooms. The employment of such literary components such as narratives, short stories, one-person acts, fables, dialogues and short social situations, will help learners to use different forms of the language in one notion of the language. It will, more importantly, motivate and inspire the learners to know more and keep his or her interest intact.

**Literature review**

The discourse that whether literature can be helpful in the learning of foreign language has evoked divergent views. It is widely believed that the study of language has to be in accordance with and with special reference to the needs of the language learners. There have been different points of views about the place of literature or literary texts in the foreign language or second language curriculum.

Prof. Blatchford (1972) believes that the learners of EFL at the primarily and secondary levels are primarily concerned with the acquisition of the functional skills of the target language that would help them in dealing with everyday occurrences that can be expressed through the basic skills: "the study of English literature is a luxury that cannot be indulged during the limited a mount of time allocated to English" (p. 27).

Books relating to the methodologies of language teaching have focused in detail on the attitude of the teacher towards the changes that have taken place and his role in the spread of innovative modes of teaching. Widdowson argues, "Language teachers have the responsibility to mediate changes in pedagogic

practice so as to increase the effectiveness of language teaching." (p.36)

With so much of discussion on the importance and usefulness of the literary texts or literature as effective language teaching tools, it is imperative to frame a language course that corresponds to the social contexts of the language learners. There is a practical need to design a syllabus that suits the needs of the learners and, at the same time, enables them to express themselves in social circumstances with ease and interest. Many language-training courses are useful in bringing about a change in the behavioral pattern of the learners enriching their verbal fluency.

Elsa Auerbach in her book, *Making Meaning, Making Change* has attempted an impressive and convincing account of the "participatory" and the more traditional "ends-means" approach to curriculum design. She develops a practical manual for carrying out the participatory language learning curriculum.

In the participatory model, the teacher and students work together to produce a context-specific curriculum based on the needs and desires that the students themselves experience. The teacher simply becomes, therefore, a completely different kind of leader. He discovers novel and innovative ways to induce the students to identify their own needs and interests, introducing topics and activities in the class, which allow students to use language to further their needs and interests. He also plays the role of the organizer of educational resources with a view to expand the students' knowledge of the language because of their use of it.

Rather than presenting the students with synthetic materials developed outside the classroom, Auerbach advocates that teachers combine "conscious listening," namely a sympathetic awareness of what students' real concerns are, with "catalyst" activities, i.e. language activities that get students to open up and express their real thoughts and feelings. *Making Meaning* contains an impressive list of such activities, which can include what are often called "icebreakers" to get students talking, class newspapers, picture albums, class rituals, or student-produced graphics.



Once the teacher has identified major themes in students' lives with these "ways in," she can use a variety of ready-to-hand "tools" to draw students into the deliberate use of language to address the issues they see as important. These tools can include fables, proverbs, published works of fiction, even children's books. One of the most powerful tools is what she calls "codes," carefully scripted dialogues in which characters reveal very controversial attitudes towards pressing social questions, such as racism, crime, or sexual harassment. By involving students in discussion about these codes, they not only acquire the language to address these issues, but they also begin to learn how to take positions on these issues themselves.

Culture and language learning studies prove that linguistic and literary studies touch at various points. As professor Blatchford argues, "the linguistic interest of culture learning is broader, its approach more scientific and pragmatic, but there is no reason why it should not include in its scope the literary uses of language..." (p.3).

Literary texts include cultural uses of linguistic expressions such as stylistics, pragmatics and semantics. This social communication reflects the usage of different language aspects in the literary texts. Moreover, in the study of language and culture, literary study can make a valuable contribution in tracing the development of the language in all its components and skills. What is more important is that, non- native students need to be exposed to various literary texts in order to be able to consider the others' culture in their international communication.

As regards the learning of English as a Second language at the higher level, Prof. Blatchford says, "there may be more justification for literary studies where English is a second rather than a foreign language" (p.5).

It is an undeniable fact that the resources of language can be fully utilized by taking recourse to literature as an important aspect of language learning. For great skill and effectiveness, literature is necessary for language learning. W.R. Lee in his editorial in the journal English Language Teaching says:

... Literature is rooted, so far as the foreign-language learner is concerned, in the oral basis of language learning; rooted in lively and meaningful oral drills, in spoken and acted dialogues, in simple dramatization of stories; indeed in those very procedures which make for successful and interested learning of the language. (p.4)

Not pure literature in the strictest sense of the term and regarded as a pre-literary genre by some purists, nursery rhymes have their own veritable significance in motivating very young learners to learn use a second language. It is interesting, in the light of the above observation, to note how a child listens to the nursery rhymes and learns the vocabulary through oral drills without going through the oftentimes tedious practice of turning over the pages of a dictionary of usages. When a child in his primary years of learning English in a classroom listens to his English teacher reciting the nursery rhyme

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

may be told about the star and the sky. The rest of the words enter his receptive cognition and suggest the intended meaning of the lines when he observes star-studded night sky. The words '*twinkle*,' '*wonder*', and '*diamond*' render their meanings clear when he conjures up the image of the star in the sky. This receptive cognition of vocabulary stays in his experience of the target language and helps him learn faster. Frequent contact with words reinforces his propensity for adducing meaning from the contexts in which they appear. It is an exercise in futility to try to memorize words from a dictionary. It results, more often than not, in failure and monotony. Literary texts provide us with a lot of opportunity to learn effectively to use words in different contexts.

**Literature and Communication**

Both literature and language teaching involve the development of a feeling for language or responses to texts. The responses of the learners to the literary texts reading and interpreting will help them to –

- develop their reading strategies.
- develop their reading skills.
- keep by heart useful quotations and expressions.
- integrate language skills such as listening and reading as receptive skills and speaking and writing as productive skills.
- be exposed to the conversations and the dialogues which are actually used in the outside world. These dialogues and conversations create a situation inside the classroom for using language which the learner might need outside in the society.

Mr. James: Will you have a look at my car please?
Mechanic: What's the matter with it?
Mr. James: Well, I 'm not sure. But it's not running very well and it won't start easily.
Mechanic: We'll check the engine for you and find out what the trouble is.

(Richards and Long, p. 44)

The current innovations in the teaching approaches and syllabus design focus on the communicative purposes of language teaching and learning. The language studies move towards the human purposes and the functions of the language to fulfill these purposes. This focus on the learner and his needs, ability and interest through different functions of the language will create a change in the responses of the learner. These responses reflect learner's competence, performance and motivation. The above dialogue includes something, which the students want to acquire. It contains some language items to be learnt. The language items in this dialogue will be acquired because each student will know that this expression can be used in the similar situations outside the classroom. Such texts will bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world. In other words, the students will be exposed to the language items, which they actually need in their spontaneous communication outside the school.

Nowadays, information technology and globalization necessitate what is called the international communication in the fields of economy, trade and politics as well as the international business. For the students to be prepared for such communication, they should study culture and language. The modern studies in linguistics, especially sociolinguistics show that culture learning is an influential factor in international communication.

To this point, one can say that teaching literature or literary texts in the curriculum of the non- native learners will:

- solve the problem of relevant vocabulary for social communication.
- prepare students to be professional translators in different fields such as trading, business, science, law and technology.
- link language and culture to facilitate everyday communication.

**Literary devices and language skills**

Literature, especially poetry, operates within the parameter of certain 'literary' devices, language variety and syntactic patterns which to a large extent are believed to be the domain of literature alone and which cannot be taught at any level to the learners of language in the strictest sense of the term. Literary devices like metaphor, structural ambiguity, alliteration, semantic density, and some phonological patterns create an atmosphere of meanings through their subtle usages. When we examine our everyday language, we notice with an almost astonishing realization that these devices play a great role in shaping our everyday speech.

Metaphor, for instance, is a figure of speech in which an idea or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another idea or action to suggest common quality shared by the two. In our daily discourse we use metaphors unsparingly as when we talk of someone who is not reliable, we say *'Beware of him! He may stab you in the back'*. In both the literal and the figurative cases, the effect of stabbing is painfully agonizing.



The employment of structural ambiguity suggests the use of language that may be understood in many different ways. In poetry, it is considered as a source of poetic richness. In our daily discourse, ambiguity is often resolved by referring to the context. Ambiguity is often used today as a feature of advertising slogans, cartoon captions and general anecdotes. Notice the conversation between a doctor and an overweight woman:

Doctor: What is the largest weight you have been?
Overweight woman: Sixteen stone.
Doctor: And the smallest?
**Overweight woman: Six pounds. (p.46)**

Alliteration is repetition of the same sounds usually at the beginning of a word or syllable. Mainly poets for various special effects use this device. It has a long literary tradition since the literature of the Old Germanic languages. English verses abound with alliterations. What is interesting in language is the fact that it is in a constant state of flux, and with it the words and expressions used in a particular genre cross over, after much use and reuse, to the domain of ordinary public speech enriching it in that process. Alliteration, therefore, entered our daily discourse in though common but deeply meaningful expressions like 'thick as thieves', 'where there's a will there's a way', or 'by fair means or foul'.

It is generally asserted that semantic density or the density of allusions evident in a certain kind of combination of words is, as it should be, associated with literature. We may not entirely agree with it when we discover that word combinations suggesting semantic density occur in our normal communication in the form of billboard advertisements and tongue in cheek expressions. Expressions like 'chicken-hearted', 'henpecked', are examples of semantic density. In their Introduction to *Literature and Language Teaching*, Brumfit and Carter present a very interesting example of double entendre demonstrating semantic density in common speech as it appears in a funny dialogue,

Q. How do you make a Swiss roll?
A. Push him down a mountain. (P.7)

In one another example of lexical ambiguity a sign posted on the gym door reads "Anyone caught swinging from the basketball nets will be suspended from the gym." The subtle play on the word 'suspended' is evident of the way in which it is imaginatively utilized. Old proverbs are fast disappearing giving way to new sayings in the light of the new techno-crazy world order. One such proverb says 'A journey of a thousand sites begins with a single click.' Mad cows and bird flu are scaring even the fondest of meat lovers away from meaty meals towards a more vegan diet. To make vegetables more attractive and delicious there are ranch dressings. 'Hidden Valley' is one of the most popular brands of flavored dressings. An advertisement for the 'Hidden Valley' product presents a picture of a vegetable farm with the following caption 'A vegetable this ugly deserves to be smothered'. The pun on 'smothered' is deployed to emphasize on the density of meaning the word carries. 'Smothering', thus, is not crushing and destroying the vegetable but making it more delicious by covering it with the dressings. It is these ambiguities, which are the hallmark of literary discourse, and which is liberally and effectively used in common parlance today.

**Why literature is useful in language learning?**

There is no intention, whatsoever, in these lines to stress on the supremacy of literary discourse over language learning. It is, nevertheless, imperative to suggest through the preceding pages that literature plays a pivotal role in developing language-learning abilities by training learners to infer meaning through different language clues. This in turn enforces stimulating and enjoyable linguistic communication. Literary discourse offers perspective, which inspires learners to think and use language in a sensible and effective way. 'Language is power and power cannot be asserted and impressed if it is not effectual'.

The second point to be made here with regard to the assimilation of the literary text in language learning boils down to the choice of context. The subject matter or context is an important element in the process of language learning. If the subject matter is uninteresting and stale, it will not inspire learners. More often than not, language pundits frame out of the context language courses selecting sentences and texts randomly without any content or perspective. In the absence of context, the learners are left to use words in a limited and conditioned sense. Literature, on the other hand, provides subject matter that has the power to motivate learners and help them in exploring the possibilities of usages and meaning that enhances their language competence in a big way.

The subject matter of literary discourse is authentic and is based on social and palpable realities and not on prescribed, mechanical or standard word pictures. Since the literary text explores the resources of language to its highest capacity, the learner therefore, is inspired through the reading of the literary texts to learn language in real life situations and communicate with fluidity of expressions.

Language learning is effective when it inspires to develop responses, reinforce messages. The more varied the response the richer language learning becomes. Mechanical, formulaic, graded, and discrete language teaching reduces learners to imitative and unmotivated speakers and writers. Literature enthuses feelings through words, pulls learners out of the graded grammatical forms over to the non-restrictive usages of language helping to communicate in a way that attracts language learning.

Literature offers a wide range of language structures, which can enhance our understanding of the range of language usages. This understanding has a direct impact on the learners' ability to learn and use language not for mechanical responses but for the expression and response of those thoughts and ideas which would have stifled in the brain in the absence of rich language resources. Literary work, in such a situation, becomes a vehicle for language learning.

**The Method**

(a) The subjects

Forty male students were selected for the study. They were all undergraduates who had studied English at the preparatory and secondary levels at the public schools. They were divided into two target groups. Group A is considered as a Control group while Group B is considered as Experimental group.

(b) Materials

This study utilized two different syllabi for teaching English language skills. Group A was exposed to a language syllabus that contained canonical instructions and exercises on language skills with little or no exposure to literary discourse. Group B, on the other hand, was exposed to an experimental syllabus that included the different literary genres such as excerpts from novels, short stories, drama and poetry. This syllabus was designed mainly to develop English language ability in the learners through literature or literary texts.

(c) Procedure

The two groups were administered a Pre-Test to measure the targeted language skills that was to be taught to them. These groups were selected for instruction for a complete semester. After the end of the semester these groups were given Post-Tests based on their different instruction materials.

The duration of the study was for a complete semester in which the Control group was given instructions in language skills through a strictly language oriented syllabus with no literary discourse. The Experimental group was taught language skills through exposure to literary texts belonging to the different genres of English literature.

**Results and data analyses**

The results of the Tests given out to the two groups show the outcome of this research project. They also establish the basic assumption on which the entire paper is prepared. The result of the Control group is displayed in Table 1A and that of the Experimental Group is demonstrated in Table 1 B:

| **Table 1A** | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 13.8 |
| Standard Error | 0.6110 |
| Standard Deviation | 1.9322 |
| Sample Variance | 3.7333 |
| Minimum | 10 |
| Maximum | 16 |
| Count | 20 |
| Confidence Level (95.0%) | 1.3822 |
| **Table 1B** | |
| Mean | 14.2 |
| Standard Error | 0. 8537 |
| Standard Deviation | 2.6998 |
| Sample Variance | 7.2889 |
| Minimum | 10 |
| Maximum | 17 |
| Count | 20 |
| Confidence Level (95.0%) | 1.9313 |

The above tables show the results which measured the targeted language skills for each group. The result demonstrates that the groups are almost homogenous in their basic language skills. The mean for Table 1 A is 13.8 and for Table 1 B it is 14.2. There is a difference of only .4 between both the groups, which is quite normal and credible in any selected groups. The Standard Error is also quite

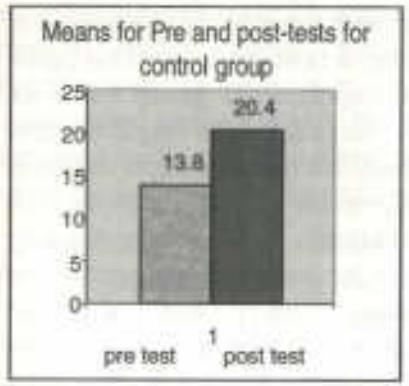
the same. There is a slight difference in Standard Deviation which again displays the same natural human variance.

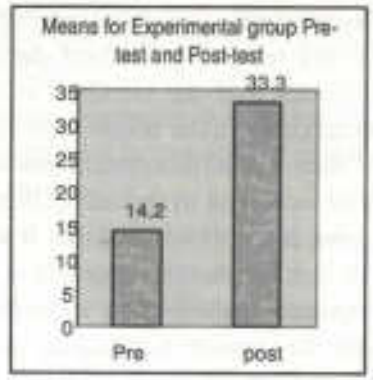
At the end of the semester when the instructions were complete, the two groups were given out Post-Tests based on the components and study material that were designed for them. The result of the Control group is shown in Table 2 A and that of the Experimental group in Table 2 B. The following are the results of the two groups:

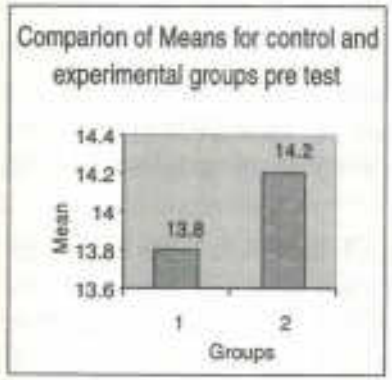
| **Table 2A** | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 20.4 |
| Standard Error | 0.6670 |
| Standard Deviation | 2.1187 |
| Sample Variance | 4.4889 |
| Minimum | 16 |
| Maximum | 24 |
| Count | 20 |
| Confidence Level (95.0%) | 1.5156 |
| **Table 2B** | |
| Mean | 33.3 |
| Standard Error | 1.5638 |
| Standard Deviation | 4.9453 |
| Sample Variance | 24.4556 |
| Minimum | 26 |
| Maximum | 39 |
| Count | 20 |
| Confidence Level(95.0%) | 3.7623 |

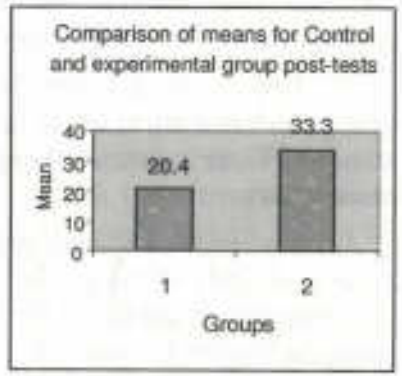


## GRAPHS




Tables 2 A and 2 B show the findings of the Post-Tests administered to the Control group and the Experimental group. The Experimental group a significantly greater gain in language skills than the Control group. There is a big difference between the means of the Experimental group (33.3) and the Control group (20.4). The graphs also show the change in the difference between the means of both the groups in the Pre-Test and the Post-Tests. This shift in means from the Pre-Test to the Post-Tests is an obvious indicator to the fact that literary discourse has helped the Experimental group students to move up in their language learning ability in a dramatic way.

## Conclusion

The statistical analysis of the Post-Test results proves that the Experimental group scored higher marks due to the usefulness of literary texts they studied during the whole semester. This result indicates that the standard of the Experimental group has risen remarkably in the acquisition of the language skills taught to them. In other words, this result demonstrates that there are important gains to be achieved in including literature in the curriculum of the non-native learners of English. Both literature and language teaching involve the development of feeling for language or spontaneous responses to the literary texts. Reading and interpreting literary texts help the learners to retain in memory useful quotations and phrases which they can use in their everyday speech. Moreover, the literary texts integrate linguistic competence with communicative competence by putting language into use in different social situations.

It shall not, therefore, be out of place to emphasize that a strong concerted effort has to be made for the inclusion of literary texts in EFL curriculum at all stages, whether primary, intermediate, or secondary.

Literature or literary text can bridge, to a large extent, the acute realization of the cultural differences that is eating into our understanding of normal and natural human differences. Literature opens the windows to intercultural awareness while at the same time nurturing empathy, a tolerance for diversity, and the fostering of intelligence. Poetry would go a long way in providing language learners with the expansion of their experience of larger human reality which in turn can shape his language and provide more meaning and richness to it.

It is imperative on the part of the language teacher to provide learners with interesting short stories from the finest treasures of English literature to induce in them a desire to make reading as a habit and develop text reading strategies. Foreign language learners benefit from reading target-language literature because it gives practice in the pragmatic contextualization of linguistic expression.



There is no doubt, a close relationship between educational goals and literary texts that are selected for study. The educationists, therefore, should make an appropriate selection from literature to meet the learner's needs, level, ability and interests at all stages. For example, for the primary pupils, simple verses, sayings, one-act plays and games would be fun for them. Generally, young learners acquire a useful contextualized language and keep by heart simple wisdoms, songs, proverbs and short stories.

Young learners are usually motivated and willing to know a foreign language, so these literary texts will help them to acquire the language as a means of communication. This selected literature would make them native-like speakers because grammar is acquired implicitly, therefore, the stage is very important for making teaching English as use and function-focus. Teachers of language should try to understand that the importance and effectiveness of teaching language lies in its spontaneous and impressive use by the learners.

Therefore, the non-native learners' curriculum should include teaching literary texts or literature to facilitate such international communication for the students. Furthermore, literature consists of some lexical items and expressions, which cannot be found in the linguistic texts. Literary texts and literature texts contextualized and socialized language items and lead naturally to the use of actual words and expressions in real situations.

There is no denying the fact, in the light of the observations made in this paper and the suggestions advanced therein, that literature plays a vital and stimulating role in the acquisition of language in a relevant and causal sense. We can, therefore, safely conclude that literature or literary texts can play a vital role in developing language skills among the non-native learners of English and helping them to use language for communicative purposes in the real world.

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# Oriental Fixations and New Configurations:

## A Post-Colonial Perspective on Anurag Mathur's *The Inscrutable Americans*

***K B Razdan***

When Shall we meet again?
In thunder, lighting and rain,
When the hurly burly is done
And the battle is lost and won.

—William Shakespeare *Macbeth*

Anurag Mathur's *The Inscrutable Americans* qualifies as an epicentric postcolonial work, combining within its narrative matrix all the staple nuances of postcoloniality having a head-on collision with the doxifying socio-cultural ambience of the Western world. The hero-narrator, Gopal Kumar, is a sub continental bumpkin all at sea in the American heartland. The author's innovative blend of fun, delight, and an astute insight into cultural disparity, makes *The Inscrutable Americans* a highly readable and intensely reflective work of fiction. The narrative is bereft of any postcolonial anguish or contempt, instead we have a witty and comical celebration of both India and America.

The hero is sent to U.S. for higher studies by an upper-middle class Indian family and strange notions are infused in his head about American society, especially American girls and women, by his mother and grandmother. Gopal is strictly and sternly told not to look at American girls, not to touch beef and to keep away from every kind of alcoholic drinks. In other words, Gopal is sought to be a postcolonial Don Quixote who must construct and concentrate



on his own windmill, during his academic odyssey in the United States. Gopal's family, including his father, grandfather and great grandfather, have been business tycoons owing a hair oil manufacturing factory. A veritable doomsday syndrome is set in motion in Gopal's mind by his overprotective mother and grandmother. Anurag Mathur's dexterity and finesse in the narrative of the *The Inscrutable Americans* present to the reader the postcolonial deconstructive ethos of mass society, candidly visible in the very language the young hero speaks as he desperately struggles to retain an endearing dignity and a startling shrewdness.

*The Inscrutable Americans* as a postcolonial fictional text, does not so much harp upon the self-contempt or postcolonial anguish, instead it brings to the fore the decreative antithetical syntagm of cultural dichotomy vis-à-vis Indian and American society. What really dazzles in the entire novel is the idiolect of Indian and American paradoxes, of cultural, intellectual and emotional disparity. Right from the moment Gopal boards the aircraft for his journey to the U.S, the mother's and grandmother's diktats continuously echo inside him when the author employs the intercalary-cum-epistolary technique. The narrative opens with Gopal's letter to his younger brother in which he talks about the do's and don'ts given to him by his mother and grandmother. He writes:

> Kindly assure mother that I am strictly consuming vegetarian food only in restaurants though I am not knowing if cooks are Brahmins. I am also constantly remembering Dr. Verma's advice and strictly avoiding American women and other unhealthy habits. I hope Parent's Prayers are residing with me.
>
> (*Anurag* 2004: 9)

Gopal's disastrous English is quite visible in the preceding lines, it becomes more disastrous ahead when he feels lost and misplaced, a postcolonial personage, a contemporary Gulliver all at sea amidst a totally alien culture, working culture, and above all the American academic system of teaching and learning. He further writes to his brother:

> "Most surprising thing about America is it is full of Americans. Everywhere Americans, Americans, big and white, it is little frightening. The flight from New Delhi to New York is arriving safely thanks to God's Grace and Parents' Prayers and mine too. I am not able to go to bathroom whole time because I am sitting in corner seat as per Revered Grandmother's wish. Father is rightly scolding that airplane is flying too high to have good view. Still please tell her I have done needful."(9)

What could be more comical and funny than Gopal's lines in his letter which amply demonstrate the hero's mental confusion and psychic disorientation as a misplaced picaro in an alien land and an incomprehensible culture.

On his arrival in America, the hero is well received and taken to his apartment on a college campus in Eversville. What strikes Gopal as something strange, yet welcome, is the extremely friendly, open and relaxing attitude of the Americans, he encounters during the early days of his stay. Gopal as the personification of the colonial aftermath feels totally at loggerheads with everything and his early encounters with American people and culture symbolize "an ameliorative and therapeutic theory" (*Gandhi* 2005: 8) which eventually makes the hero compelled to undertake "the task of remembering and recalling..." (*Gandhi* 2005: 8) Gopal writes back further to his brother:

> "I must say Americans are very advanced. And as I am leaving airplane, airhostess is giving me one more can of coca-cola. Her two friends are also with her but why they are laughing so much I do not know. I hope she was not laughing for racial. Perhaps she was feeling shy earlier." (10)

It is quite obvious here that Gopal's conceptualization regarding Americans and their way of living is really comical, being rooted in the residual hangovers from the colonial past. The more experiences Gopal goes on having about Americans and their attitudinal and behavioral eccentricities, the more the hero becomes clumsy, laughable and lost in his conclusions and estimates. Another good instance of this fact can be discerned in these lines:

> "At customs, brother, I am getting big shock. One fat man is grunting at me and looking cleverly from small eyes. 'First visit?' he is asking, 'yes,' I am agreeing. 'Move on' he is saying making chalk marks on bags. As I am picking up bags he is looking directly at me and saying "Watch your ass." (11)

Gopal is escorted to his allotted apartment on the college campus in Eversville, and what strikes him as quite strange is to see every gadget in working condition. He can't believe that he is really in America and the very excitement makes him tremble. His narrative consciousness spills the beans in these words:

> "It was all so alien, so wonderful, yet so scary. Would he adjust, would they like him, would they be friendly, would he do well in class, where would he get vegetarian food cooked by Brahmins?" (16)

Gopal's Brahmin hangover infused in his psyche by an orthodox mother and grandmother reminds us about the postmodern pattern of fictional experience, the hero encounters within the Internal fiction of *The Inscrutable Americans*. In this context Gopal's revelatory and increasingly deconstructive experiences, among American men and women, get intrinsically related to "the perpetual tension between self and society..." (*Litz* 1963: 319)

Gopal as the hero is a purely social creation, a postcolonial oriental Huck Finn. As an Indian from a highly religious and conservative family, he is supposed to stick, even in America, to certain social norms approved by his family. As the narrative progresses further the reader can easily witness that it is Gopal's "altered apprehension of the self, no less than the changed condition of society, that defines the character of the hero." (*Litz* 1963: 325)

In contrast to the "blanket of dust and grime" (19) much of which is contributed by his family's hair oil factory, Gopal witnesses

quite a different scene in his American environs. He says, "it is all so quiet and green, brother... "(19)

Gopal feels that is an ambassador from his country to America and he must behave well to be in the good books of the Americans. Sunil, the Indian-American, who drives Gopal from New York airport to his college campus apartment in Eversville, tells him:

> "The girls here are very suspicious of foreign guys because they think the guys are all trying to lay them. I don't know why they're so damn wary considering that Yank guys do nothing except try to lay them too, but since we're foreigners we've got to take it easy a bit. Okay?" (24)

Gopal comes to the US to study chemical engineering and then go back to India to "use new technologies in our factory" (24). The postcolonial hero of *The Inscrutable Americans* confronts in America and the American system of working and learning "something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant." (*Said* 1991: 432) Gopal Kumar may not exactly be a subaltern, yet the extremist silly notions put into his mind by his family matriarch, make him startled, excited, and eventually derailed, as the narrative progresses. He is told: "The sex act has more names in America than anything else... The problem though is, that not only are they obsessed with sex, they're making the rest of the world equally crazy." (26)

Real fun, irony, displacement, disjunction and cultural dichotomy encapsulate the hero's consciousness when an American friend, Randy, warns him, "Never take no shit from nobody. They give you shit, you give back two buckets of shit. You know what I mean?' (30). The deeper and more analytical forays, Gopal makes into the American sociological world, the more he meets and cultivates Americans, especially women and even academics, the more we feel inclined to agree with Edward Said's notions about travel books as "natural a kind of text, as logical in their composition and in their use, as any book one can think of ... when the uncertainties of travel in strange parts seems to threaten one's



equanimity." (*Said* 1991: 432) As a traveller to the United States, Gopal experiences the new country and finds things and realities not conforming to his expectations and family indoctrination. The very night he spends at Eversville campus becomes a kind of a nightmare, and when he wakes up in the morning he wonders about his politics of location: "A feeling of total fright went through him as though each cell on his body had been touched with ice. He really didn't want to get up. He worried about what lay ahead. Monsters with American faces materialized in front of him waiting to perform unimaginable cruelties." (31-32) Ironically, before he arrives in the US, Gopal has already read *Penthouse Letters* and it is this work which paradoxically becomes his "finest possible guide to survive in America" (33).

Things really become deconstructionist and mind-boggling for Gopal when he himself witnesses the terrible contrast between life in an Indian city and a totally different ambience in the American scenario. Gopal marvels over the "tinkling silence" which greets him in his American environs. No longer does he experience the constant roar, shrieking peddlers, screaming buyers, horror of prices and above all spilled things like fruits, clothes, vegetables, books and the customary deafening noise pollution. He finds even the sales girls in American malls very friendly and cooperative. The American supermarket culture overwhelms and bedazzles Gopal and he can do nothing except getting hypnotized. He goes on writing letters to his younger brother and thanks to his gradual Americanization, he feels even his revered Grandmother becoming an increasing nuisance. The old lady's directive that he must only eat food cooked by Brahmin cooks becomes the biggest joke. Symbolically a disillusioned postcolonial Gulliver, Gopal as a denizen from the new Third World Orientalism faces a stupendous challenge. He has two alternatives before him. One is to carry on as if nothing had happened, whereas "The second was to adapt the old ways to the new." (*Tak* 2004: 441). For the hero as an Orientalist, who believes that 'The Orient never changes, the new is simply the old betrayed by new..." (*Tak* 2004: 441)

As days pass on, Gopal becomes increasingly the misunderstanding dis-Oriental. Finally, as a revisionist anti-climactic alternative he totally dispenses with Orientalism, at least in conceptualization and practice, not to talk of personal relations. Thus, he becomes the part of a tiny minority among postcolonials who in their respective behaviourisms dispense with Orientalism totally. Gopal marvels over what he is told: "Since, this is America, you can do what you like" (31). Gopal's first real encounter with an American woman, Gloria, comes in his allotted apartment on Eversville Campus. Gloria is an obese lady who loves writing poetry and enticing Gopal to fall for her. The experience with Gloria makes him tell his American friend and Campus mate Randy, "Women... are strange people" (46).

The hero goes on enlightening himself with American options and lifestyles including the consumerist syndrome:

> "In India the options available to a buyer were much fewer so a man really bought whatever he could get – often the decision was made for him by whatever was available, while in America a man's possessions were actually a very personal statement of his likes, lifestyles and attitude to life" (47).

All the same, Gopal as person belonging to a successful business family is easily able to negotiate and bargain in the American market. But, leaving apart the nitty-gritty of American supermarket synergy, what looks apostatic is Randy's determination that Gopal should undergo "operation Devirginisation" (53). The crudity, the violence and the body-play involved in American soccer matches disturb Gopal no end. Randy tells him, "I mean it's my duty to teach some poor ignorant heathen like the fine prints of life in Yanky Doodle Land. Can't have you going back to your ungodly village believing all Yanks are apes who bash each other - even if it is true." (64)

In the early days of his stay in America, Gopal never really thinks about himself as belonging to any particular colour. In India, such a thought never occurred to him, but in the US, he felt that this



colour aspect defined and gave meaning "to nearly every movement of his life" (89). He felt that at Eversville as a Chemical Engineering student he got used to 'receiving so much attention and he certainly didn't enjoy it, particularly because it arose from curiosity rather than approval." (89). It wasn't that Gopal was being subjected to racial discrimination, it was plain curiosity on part of American students, rather than the teachers, that he received so many glances. Nobody seemed "normal" to him. He felt that his "entire life in India has become irrelevant and meant nothing. Not his own achievements, not his family's affluence, everything was beyond the curtain of mirrors with which America bounded itself." (89) Gopal almost feels like a subaltern who had to "recreate himself" in America but, paradoxically, "the basic building block of his new persona was his colour." (89) The realization becomes more and more acute in Gopal, as the days go by, in Eversville, that no matter what he achieved, "or however respected he became in the classroom, the moment he stepped outside, his colour came and wrapped itself around him like a clown's clothes that had been hanging outside, waiting for him." (89) Even in the classroom, much to Gopal's relief, "he felt a sense of being de-coloured the better he did, the less alien and awkward he felt. The revelled in the sense of attracting respect. But once outside, he constantly felt as though nature had constructed him badly." (89)

In tune with the blend of postmodernism and postcoloniality, and as conveniently demonstrated in the works of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, what happens to Gopal is that the hero of *The Inscrutable Americans* adopts a marginal place for himself amidst a dominant self-conscious country like America and its historical acquisitions. The colour syndrome which afflicts Gopal like a virus becomes rather ridiculous simply "to demonstrate the inner principles of weakness within Orientalism, or racist ideologies of blackness in order to challenge the western claims to severely self-aware rationality..." (*Connor* 1996: 234).

The other realization virtually deconstructs Gopal and constructs dissident micro-territories in consonance with the "desire, not for legitimation by inclusion or identification with dominant

forms, but the desire for legitimation by opposition, by disidentification." (236). Anyhow the "Alice" in Wonderland scenario is the hero's "desire for legitimation" while mixing with American women and his classmates, all the time trying to disidentify himself with a spectrum of responses instilled in his mind by his mother and grandmother. The rhetoric of disidentification eventually lands Gopal in trouble. As his hesitations evaporate, he becomes bolder, thanks to his American friend and campus mate Randy, the postcolonial industrialist hero now longs to become more intimate with American women during dance parties and evolving intimacies.

Gopal's Oriental postcolonial hangovers and acquisitions vis-à-vis stupid indoctrinations of his mother and grandmother get progressively eroded with the passage of time and things reach a real climax, when, while having food in a restaurant with Randy and two American girls, Ann and Sue, steak is ordered by Ann and Gopal consumes the same with relish thinking that what he ate was vegetarian stuff. When he is told that it was a beef steak which he had eaten, his American friend Randy tells him that the beef is obtained from "sacred cows" (118). Ann further tells him "Why? Why? ...It's great beef here. I mean I've eaten here lots and it is the best red meat you can buy. That's why I ordered steak." (118). After eating beef ignorantly, Gopal undergoes a psychic trauma, he sweats and pants and feels a nuclear war going on inside his head, "an active insurgency" (119), invading his mind.

Gopal also undergoes the trauma of an attack by chauvinist, racial goons who try to kill him. Yet the American scene, the academic and technical facilities, avenues of learning, interaction, absence of jealousy and acrimony, simply bedazzle him and make him abandon any thoughts of returning to India and leaving his study programme incomplete. He contemplates the near perfect ambience of the American scenario, the more he muses over it, the more he marvels over the incredible ethos and work culture:

> "And yet here there was tranquillity, efficiency, a certain new-world courtesy and civility all their own. There were amazing facilities to study, unimaginable in India. The business of living was made easy, so you could get on with doing more than surviving... Food, drink, transport, communication, housing, clothing, the essentials were cheap and easy. In India, you clawed your way through the day, through dirt and glamour and people who seemed to strip the skin off your bones when they dealt with you, leaving every nerve raw." (125)

In these words we get the quintessential deconstructed, demythologized marginalized postcolonial hero, overawed spectacularly by demarginalization, by being brought to the centre from the margins of a receding horizon.

The spectre of colonized India with starving millions and decrepit beggars, still lives in the minds of Gopal's American friends, particularly Randy. "Famine-stricken India" (138), that is how Randy introduces the country of Gopal and the latter tries hard to dispel this erroneous notion by giving the true facts, in terms of our country's progress and developmental programmes and avenues, the Indian Government has been offering to the people. All the same, Gopal's real interest, as his mind gets progressively decolonized by the American experience, lies epicentrically in making sexual conquests of women. He nearly does it, but cannot digest nor rationalize the fact that notions of sexual fidelity, being true to a man as lover, became claptrap for a women in the US. This constitutes the real "inscrutability" for the Indian-origin hero, the postcolonial picaro, let loose in America on an academic programme.

The American academic-cum-technological odyssey of Gopal ends on an anticlimactic note: Anurag Mathur's hero fails to make a sexual conquest of an American woman when a perfect opportunity comes. He simply fails to "decolonize" his mind of his family's moralizing sermons, an acquisition from colonial cow-webs of the past. *The Inscrutable Americans* ends on a note of disappointment for the reader. The hero in Gopal on the eve of the completion of his American stay at Eversville campus, "reverts" back to the status of marginalized personage. His "dream" fails, the American socio-cultural cosmos remains an inscrutable enigma.

Needless to say, Mathur's *The Inscrutable Americans* as a postcolonial text concludes the narrative with total dedoxification of the hero, whose self-reflexivity takes a hard punch as he is poised to return to his native country as an "illuminated" and refurbished young man, ready to function, back home, as an icon of the Hair oil Manufacturing Industry.

In the portraiture of Gopal's character as the hero of *The Inscrutable Americans*, the author reminds us about the dismemberment of Orpheus by Maenads. Even after dismemberment, the severed head of Orpheus alongwith the legendary singer's lyre thrown into the river, continued to sing after dismemberment. This is exactly what happens to Gopal when he suffers a gradual "dismemberment" of his native Indian culture and traditions during his stay in America. The very notion that as a young enterprising person from an Indian industrial family, he would now be able to function more effectively in furthering business interests, sounds ironic and in tune with the postmodernist trait: 'will to unmaking'. At time of leaving for the U.S., Gopal's psyche is imbued with the antithesis of Eastern and Western cultures and what he eventually undergoes in the U.S. is what in postmodernist typology gets defined on three planes: Process, Performance and Happenings. The process the hero undergoes during his American experience makes him crave for the freedom, which he couldn't even imagine while living in his native country. Gopal's conscience tells him that now, on the eve of his departure for home, what he craved for was "to rebel against the way things were at home" (245). The hero's ultimate encounter with American ethos comes when on the eve of boarding the plane for India at New York airport, he runs into a lady in the first class lounge, "a woman in a sari sitting opposite, matching him drink for drink. She smiled at him and got up and walked around a bit before sitting next to him. She was in her early forties, had fashionably short hair, expensive ear-rings, but a pleasant rather than beautiful face" (245). In Gopal's meeting a woman, old enough to be his mother yet getting passionately drawn to her signifies a contemporary postcolonial hero's sacrificial quality of his passions,



his actions having "the concrete self-definition of an existential encounter" (*Litz* 1963: 325).

The last laugh comes when he makes love to this woman at a height of 30,000 feet in the plane's toilet and in his own words, he "at last felt he had truly become a man" (246). When he awakes, when his plane in about to take off from London, he sees that the woman was gone, having disembarked. What the reader exactly gets at this climactic point in the novel's narrative is a trendy mix, an interesting and "most significant collision and collusion of postcolonial and feminist theory..." (*Gandhi 2005:* 86).

During his flight from London to India, Gopal remembers the envelope Gloria had given to him before his departure from Eversville. He opens the envelope, takes out the letter and reads her poetic lines:

> I wish we had got some time/ so I could make you mine/
> I know you'll find a love as fine, / In some unexpected time. (247)

Gloria's poetic episode coupled with Gopal's whole set of experiences he gains at Eversville, plainly symbolises "a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness..." (*Said* 1991: 202-3)

Anurag Mathur's *The Inscrutable Americans* qualifies as an uneasy text that betrays its own compulsions with Oriental acculturization and the Western intervention into the "native woman question" (*Gandhi* 2005: 95). All said and done, *The Inscrutable Americans* precipitates and invokes the rhetoric of cultural authenticity weaved into the hero's fictional experience within the text's novelistic cosmos, not to say that the author succeeds in investing his hero with a balanced dignity and behavioural equipoise.

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# (Re) Mapping Terrains of Postcolonial Literatures: Towards a New Paradigm

***Purnendu Chatterjee***

Postcolonial, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins (1989) suggest, refer to "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day". True, those colonizers no more control the administration of the colonized and the erstwhile-colonized nations are, at present, independent. At present, colonization operates on the level of culture through globalization and neo-colonialism that no more follow the simple binary of black/white and colonizer/colonized. Culture includes a wide range of concreteness and abstraction: from language to livelihood, from rituals and myths to arts and values and from codes of relationship to polity. Culture, therefore, is a social construct. It is, as Durkheim, and Berger suggests, the source of more-or-less spontaneous actions and reactions of people and their mode of dealing with objective reality and subjective formations.

Postcolonial loosely designates a set of theoretical approaches, which focus on the direct effects, and aftermaths of colonization. In this paper, I attempt to explore the ways in which postcolonial literatures, at present, attempt at transcending the historical definition of its primary object of study toward an extension of the historic and political notion of colonizing to other forms of human exploitation, normalization, repression and dependency. This paper shall discuss in brief the modus operandi of neo-colonialism and globalization and the manner in which postcolonial study reorients itself to adjust to the widening horizons. Moreover, this paper will endeavour to gauge the future of postcolonial literatures in a new internationalist and universalistic paradigm.

## I

The removal of colonial administration does not necessarily imply an escape from the colonizers' influence. In other words, it insists on the power of what Kwame Nkrumah (1962) termed "neo-colonialism'. Nkrumah became aware that the gaining of independence and national sovereignty by African states were purely token and in no substantial way altered the relationship between the colonial powers and the colonized state. In effect the formal granting of independence created a more Manichean system of dependency and exploitation:

> Neo-colonialism is... the worst form of imperialism. For those who practise it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. In the days of old-fashioned colonialism, the imperial power had at least to explain and justify at home the actions it was taking abroad. In the colony those who served the ruling imperial power could at least look to its protection against any violent move by their opponents. With neo-colonialism neither is the case. (xi)

As an attempt to over leap the influence of neo-colonialism, writers like the black aboriginal woman poet Oodgeroo in Australia, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Kenya, Monica Ali in Bangladesh, among others, advocated the creolization or complete rejection — either implicitly or explicitly through their works — of the English tongue. Fanon (1967) suggested that being colonized by a language has larger implications for one's consciousness:

> To speak...means above all to assume a culture, to support a civilization.

The "creole continuum" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2003) — this is where postcolonial studies intersect poststructural studies — is a strategy on the part of writers in which the decentring impetus of postcolonial discourse abrogates the centre. Postcolonial literatures in giving space to Pidgin English and the native language, as Aijaz Ahmad (1992) suggests, articulate the voice and vision of people living outside the periphery of Eurocentric culture. Therefore, the present literatures of the once colonized nations do not depend upon the concept of a European self as a starting point. Oodgeroo's verse is not only deeply marked by social consciousness as in *We Are Going*, but also by a desire to get back to the ways of life before the coming of the Europeans. In the poem *Gifts*, the poet reflects her simple and direct imaginings of Aboriginal life:

> 'I will bring you love', said the young lover,
> 'A glad light to dance in your dark eye.
> Pendants I will bring of the white bone,
> And gay parrot feathers to deck your hair.'
> But she only shook her head.
> 'I will put a child in your arms,' he said,
> 'Will be a great headman, great rain-maker.
> I will make remembered songs about you
> That all the tribes in all the wandering camps
> Will sing forever.'
> But she was not impressed.
> 'I will bring you the still moonlight on the lagoon,
> And steal for you the singing of all the birds;
> I will bring the stars of heaven to you,
> And put the bright rainbow into your hand.'
> 'No', she said, 'bring me tree-grubs.

However, critics have taken Oodgeroo's poetry to task. Leon Cantrell (1967) denounced her as a versifier and Andrew Taylor commented

> She is no poet, and her verse is not poetry in any true sense. It hasn't the serious commitment to formal rightness, that concern for making speech true under all circumstances.

Where the western critics went wrong is in the fact that they applied the yardstick of the colonizer's English stylistics — the "formal rightness" is a relative term and what is not formally right to the Eurocentric critics may be formally right to one outside the Eurocentric periphery — without realizing that the poet is using the language in her own way. Bruce King records a similar problem in respect to Kamala Das's Indianization of English in her poetry.

Postcolonial writers use words with the aim to subdue the experience to the language and, therefore, postcolonial literatures travel beyond the "aesthetic plane to the plane of praxis" (Digish Mehta, 1989). This is evident in Oodgeroo's *Then and Now* that not only is postcolonial in ethos but also echoes the theme of gendered subaltern:

> No more woomera, no more boomerang,
> No more playabout, no more the old ways.
> Children of nature we were then,
> No clocks hurrying crowds to toil.
> Now I am civilized and work in the white way,
> Now I have dress, now I have shoes:
> 'Isn't she lucky to have a good job!'
> Better when I had only a dillybag.
> Better when I had nothing but happiness.

The use of Pidgin English as a strategy to challenge the dominant discourse of the West is finely brought out in Ali's *Brick Lane* (2004). The letters that Nazneen's sister, Hasina, writes to her from Bangladesh is a case in point. She writes:

> The girls are pride to you. Tell them auntie send love and never forget. You say you husband teach to them poetry. How it cause trouble? Good man for him to do this task (222).

This appropriation and abrogation of the English language is a tool in the hands of the postcolonial writers to dismantle the influence of the West. Such examples abound in the writings of Derek Walcott, Samuel Selvon and Vic Reid, among others.

Nugugi wa Thiong'o's rejection of the English language is more direct. In *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (2001), written with Micere Githae Mugo, he interspersed English with Gikuyu language. Language is a part of culture and, as Thiong'o notes,

> The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe.



Therefore, in order to shrug of the yoke of neo-colonialism and to create an individual identity in time and space Thiong'o bids a final farewell to the English language in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1981). Thiong'o believes that the aim of postcolonial studies is a complete decolonization of societies through a potent regeneration of pre-colonial cultures.

Postcolonial literatures have remodeled western genres. The erstwhile colonies have used their native traditions of literature, often oral, to radically question the characteristics of the genres that the West employ as structuring and categorizing definitives. For instance, a novel like Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) employs the traditional techniques of Indian oral narrative. The circling movement of the novel between the past and the present and the tale within tale defies the Western tradition of linear progression and character developments of logocentric texts. Robert Kroetsch, the Canadian critic and poet, in the prose-poem *I'm Getting Old Now* breaks the traditional conventions of poetry in creating an aesthetic stasis around an apparently childish dilemma of playing-not playing-playing to probe, symbolically, the multiple dimensions of human existence.

## II

With the paradigmatic shifts in the world's economic, political and social structures, postcolonial theories and literatures also underwent paradigmatic shifts. Globalization, which precipitated "shifting continents and colliding cultures", celebrates, as Frederic Jameson (1998) argues, a "postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation" by placing almost all the cultures of the world in contact with one another. The contact, however, is not always direct. Often, it acts at a distance, as Held and McGrew (2003) point out,

> ...whereby the actions of social agents in one locale can come to have significant consequences for 'distant others'.

The "distant others" are, of course, the people of the "third world" who come under the influence of the culture of the "first

world". The immigrants feel the direct influences of globalization. Globalization creates, to use Edward Said's (1993) famous phrase, "cultural imperialism". The western cultures impinge upon the cultures of non-western countries that result in "fractures of cultures" (Walter D. Mignolo, 1998).

The "fractures of cultures" is felt both by the immigrants as well as by the "distant others". As Stuart Hall (2003) suggests, important to its maintaining of power is the West's ability to "make us [non-whites] see and experience ourselves as Other". This often resulted in, what Homi Bhabha (1983) terms, "metonymy of presence". Bhabha elucidates his concept of the "metonymy of presence":

> Those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse — the difference between being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different; the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classification, the Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic — all these are metonymies of presence.

The coloured natives in their desperate bid to imitate the white men become impoverished specimens of humanity who are almost the same as the white masters, but not the same, in Bhabha's words "almost the same but not white"(1983). These mimic men, living within the interfaces of two cultures, develop split identities. They hate to imitate, but cannot help imitating. This flawed mimetic effort obviously results in the creation of frustrated men who cannot come to terms with themselves as well as with the society.

Postcolonial literatures address the globalization issue in terms of the power relations, which flourish as a legacy of western imperialism. In doing so, "the mimicry of the postcolonial subject" destabilize or subvert the colonial discourse by establishing "an area of political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of imperial dominance" (Ashcroft, et al). Diaspora writers, characterized by a constant shifting of subject position in terms of geography as well as ontology, rupture the placid postcolonial life within a colonial



space and thereby disrupt the world of colonial space. Straddling across different geographical and cultural domains, diaspora writers have been able to reap a rich harvest of creative vigour. As C. Vijayasree (1996) pithily notes:

> This experience of inhabiting two geographical and cultural spaces simultaneously is wrought with subtle and involuted tensions...Such tension, however, has proved to be an active source of creative energy.

Jemubhai in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and Channu in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* provide typical examples of subverting the discourse of the West. Jemubhai tries to mimic the colonizers, realises that in trying to learn a foreign way of life, he had become the mimic man, but he would not acknowledge it. When, after retiring from his job, he meets his friend Bose who scathingly criticizes the British, he decides to remain silent. He would not acknowledge that his exalted concept of the British had bitten the dust.

> He wouldn't tumble his pride to melodrama at the end of his life and he knew the danger of confession — it would cancel any hope of dignity forever. (p. 208)

Chanu, however, does not become a mimic man. He imitated the dress of the colonial masters, but he retained in his heart the pride — sometimes drawn to excesses — of being a Bangladeshi. He had the conviction that his own native culture and history was far more glorious than the Britishers and the Britishers fabricate and misrepresent, for their own good, the glory of his native land:

> When I was in school, do you know what we learned? The English gave us the railways... Do you think they would have brought the railway if they did not want to sell their steel or their locomotives? Do you think that they brought us railways from the goodness of their hearts? (p.249)

He never felt ashamed to acknowledge himself as a native of Bangladesh, even when he takes his family to a visit to Buckingham Palace.

Postcolonialism shows the operation of the global at the local level, a process that is termed "glocalization" by Robertson (1995). For instance, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, Harish-Harry, the owner of Gandhi Café, hates his white customers — he wants to break their necks — who are his bread and butter. His daughter, however, is Americanized and her independent-self concept is heavily criticized by her parents' interdependent self-concept. A similar conflict takes place between the anglicized Sai's independent-self concept and Gyan's interdependent-self concept. Gyan feels burdened by history, "family demands and the built-up debt of centuries" (157), while Sai is occupied with National Geographic and is not burdened by the demands of interdependence. The similarity between Harish-daughter and Gyan-Sai conflicts, though not in degree but in kind, reveals, as Tejinder Kaur (2007) points out, commonalities of experience of

> ...the legal and illegal diaspora communities and individuals in America as well as by the people from other states, regions and communities from India residing in Kalimpong.

Postcolonialism not only subverts Western culture, but also reveals a complete rejection of the imperialist culture. Biju, in *The Inheritance of Loss* eschews his rat like life in America and decides to come home. Channu, in Brick Lane, also feels the centripetal pull of the home though, in a degree, less intense than Biju.

## III

Therefore, it may be affirmed that Postcolonial literatures have shifted its coordinates and remapped its earlier terrain to abrogate and challenge the Western influence voiced through Globalization and Neo-colonialism. However, a question naturally arises at this point: what is the future of postcolonial literatures and theories in the wake of a new internationalist and universalistic model



that is no more characterized by Euro-American centric ideologies? Scholars like San Juan Jr. (1998), Hardt & Negri (2000) believe that postcolonial theory has reached a dead end and that it is time to move "beyond postcolonial theory". The two high priests of postcolonial studies, Edward Said(1993) and Gayatri Spivak (1999, 2003), have veered of in different directions — Said felt that postcolonial, like any systematic theory, is theological and Spivak turned to the subalterns. Shohat and Stam (1994) questions the utility of the postcolonial as it has failed to address the politics of location. Therefore, surely, the domain of postcolonial studies need to be reoriented if it is to stay afloat in the 21st century.

Postcolonial studies, as Robert Young (1995) suggests, must be further grounded in specific analyses of the effects of larger movements and ideologies on particular localities. Postcolonial studies must not only be restricted to West-Rest collisions, but also embrace countries like Thailand and Malaysia that have never been colonized by the West. Thailand and Malaysia have been under Chinese influence in terms of culture and, may be viewed as "distant" Chinese colonies. Moreover, postcolonial studies must enfold subaltern studies, particularly in points of the traditional and sacred beliefs of the indigenous and marginalized people. These indigenous beliefs reveal the cultural identity of the marginalized as well as manifest the process of appropriation and transformation of western forms of the sacred for local empowerment. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins point out:

> Analyses of the sacred have been one of the most neglected, and may be one of the most rapidly expanding areas of post-colonial study".

If postcolonial theory and literatures with its formulations of race, hybridity, capitalism and imperialism cannot move out of West-Rest labyrinth, cannot move towards a new paradigm, it will, at best, remain a body of formulations of the cultural production of colonized people and, at worst, make true the terrible prophecy of Rukmini Bhaya Nair (2002):

> Postcoloniality awaits consignment to oblivion.

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# The Dilemma of Cultural Studies:

## Ideology and Identity Politics

***Mufti Mudasir***

The present paper aims to highlight the peculiar dilemma of cultural studies due to its inability to resolve the problem of cultural determination. It argues that cultural studies has failed to move beyond engagements with cultural practice and actually contributed to a virtual conflation of culture with identity politics. It takes a review of the theoretical shifts in the British Cultural Studies as revealed in his essays by Stuart Hall, one of the foremost intellectuals at the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies. As cultural studies allegedly moved into the era of post-Marxism, it embraced a thoroughly discursive structuralist model. The adoption of the structuralist paradigm meant a privileging of a synchronic model over a diachronic one. Hall's attempt at a synthesis of Althusser and Gramsci is a foredoomed attempt to salvage cultural studies from the clutches of discursivity. My main argument is that it is not because of contesting the reflectionist theory implied by the base/superstructure model of Classical Marxism, a move already initiated by Raymond Williams himself, but by abandoning the diachronic model which implies engagement with the issues of cultural determination that cultural studies has landed into a dilemma where ideologies produce and perpetuate the politics of identity.

Cultural Studies marks departure from the Classical Marxist model of base/superstructure which sees culture as a part of superstructure and superstructure itself as determined by the economic base. On this view culture is more or less a passive reflection of the base which is considered to be self-determined and unconditioned. In his essay "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms"

(1980) published shortly after his decade (1969-1979) heading the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall offered a discussion of the intersection of culturalism and structuralism in cultural studies with a view to consider its future course. Hall seemed to suggest that the capacity of cultural studies to deal successfully with the problems of cultural meaning depends on the degree of success it achieves in exploiting the insights of both culturalism and structuralism. Culture, having been redefined in terms different from that of Arnold and Leavis by Thompson, Williams and Hoggard, had ceased to be the ideal realm of values and had come to signify all types of social practices. Culturalism emphasized human experience and had definite humanistic inclinations. Structuralism, on the other hand, approached the problem of meaning in culture from an entirely different standpoint, rejecting the primacy of consciousness and positing objective signifying systems as the source of cultural signification. These systems were assumed to be preceding and determining the individual consciousness and experience. It was obvious that structuralism was averse to any humanistic orientation in culturalism. Hall envisioned a possibility for cultural studies to join the two apparently contradictory paradigms and this according to him was the core problem of cultural studies. The future of cultural studies was inextricably bound with the fruitful convergence of both culturalism and structuralism because they "confront—even if in radically different ways—the dialectic between conditions and consciousness and pose the question of the relation between the logic of thinking and the logic of historical process" (Hall 1980a:72). Hall, however, is clearly inclined to favour the structuralist paradigm against the cultural one and seems convinced by its argument that experience is structured by pregiven configurations. He also finds the structuralist methodology more rigorous than culturalism's "complex simplicity of an expressive causality" (Hall 1980a:68). A preference for structuralism became manifest with Hall's increasing reliance on the concepts such as non-reductionist cultural theory, the systems of signs and representations and a rejection of theoretical humanism. As was to become evident soon, Althusser became a central influence in cultural studies and Hall whole-heartedly



accepted his structuralist premises. Althusser's concept of ideology, which was a complete revision of the concept as propounded in Classical Marxism seemed of immense value to Hall. It became seminal to cultural studies as it offered a criticism of the view that ideology was the inverted reflection, in thought, of social relationships. Althusser's concept, derived from the structuralist premise, held ideology to be the formal, eternal and transhistorical structuring principle determining social practices. Tony Bennett, describing the meaning and implications of the Althusserean model writes:

> More important than the insistence on the objective, material nature of ideology is the inversion of the traditional Marxist approach to the question of the social determination of consciousness which this involves. 'It is not men's consciousness that determines their being', Marx wrote, 'but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness. 'This implies that men's consciousness is to be explained as the product of the social relationships in which they live and of the particular positions which individuals or groups occupy in those relationships. Reversing the order of determination which this implies, Althusser contends that the consciousness of social individuals is organized and produced not by the place they occupy within the social structure but by the operations upon them of those material ideological forms which result from autonomous ideological practices operating from within autonomous ideological apparatuses. Far from being a mere reflex of a consciousness which is determined by class position, ideology is viewed as an autonomous level of production with its own product: namely, the consciousness of human subjects. The work that ideology effects is that of transforming individuals into concrete social beings who are the subjects of determinate forms of consciousness.
>
> (Bennett 1979:113-114)

Hall expressed his satisfaction with what he termed as the 'paradigm shift' in cultural studies and considered it as a theoretical revolution in media studies, "at the centre of which was the rediscovery of ideology and the social and political significance of language and the politics of the sign and discourse"(Hall 1982:72). This shift, however, constituted a decisive break from the erstwhile prevalent concerns of culturalism. It implied that the study of culture was to be redefined as the study of structures underlying cultural practices. Culture came to be understood more in terms of codes, rules and taxanomies rather than practices and experiences. Signification or the study of the principles of formation underlying all consciousness and thought processes became the proper object of cultural study. Hall further noted how structuralism had dethroned the referential notion of language and shown that the sole source of meaning in culture is signification by which the world has to be made to mean. Speaking in a remarkably Althusserean tone, Hall notes that ideologies:

> pre-date individuals, and form part of the determinate social formations and conditions into which individuals are born. We have to "speak through" the ideologies which are active in our society and which provide us with the means of "making sense" of social relations and our place in them. . . . ideologies "work" by constructing for their subjects (individual and collective) positions of identification and knowledge which allow them to "utter" ideological truths as if they were their authentic authors.
>
> (Hall 1981: 31-32)

Bennett's criticism of Althusser may well be invoked for Hall:

> Arguing that an understanding of particular ideologies can only be constructed on the basis of a theory of 'ideology in general', Althusser contends that, whilst particular ideologies have a history which is, in part, determined by historical forces situated outside themselves, 'ideology' in itself has no history. In other words, there is present in all particular, historically determined ideologies an unchanging structure which is said to typify 'ideology' as such. The primary task of the theory of ideology is thus that of describing the structure which regulates not particular ideologies but the timeless totality of 'ideology' itself, an eternal, forever pre-given structure which overarches all the variant, historically determined, concrete forms of ideological practice in which it is manifested. For it is always by means of the operation of this invariant structure that ideological practices fulfill their allotted function of organizing individuals into 'subjects'.
>
> (Bennett 1979: 115-116)

The implications, however, of the acceptance of a full-blooded structuralist paradigm for cultural studies came to be noticed by Hall himself who realized how this had undermined cultural studies's capacity to engage fruitfully with the actual human experience. Hall, therefore, felt the need to turn to Gramsci to correct a rather inordinate reliance on the Althusserean model. Althusser had come under some formidable criticism which had to be considered seriously. Hall himself made a shift towards Gramsci in the 1980's making clear his preference for him. In "Cultural Studies and the Centre", he noted that, 'Gramsci massively corrects the ahistorical, highly abstract, formal and theoricist level at which structuralist theories operate." (Hall 1980b:69) He also remarked that Gramsci "provided us with a set of more refined terms through which to link the largely unconscious and given cultural categories of common sense with the formation of more active and organic ideologies, which have the capacity to intervene in the ground of common sense... to organize masses of men and women." (Hall 1980b:69)

This move of Hall, however, seems to be a foredoomed attempt to salvage a possibility of an effective intervention by individuals in an inexorably self-determined structure. Once the structuralist model, which posits meaning as an affect of relations

of various units within the structure and denies any substantial meaning to those units, has been accepted, the possibility of intervention is foreclosed. Meaning being inscribed by a structure which is a priori, eternal and complete, is hardly amenable to any notion of foundational change. Structuralism's rejection of diachrony in favour of synchrony is at the root of its logic of eternally fixed structures. On this view the individuals might identify the operating logic of structures but can hardly alter it. Hall's argument of intervention in an ideology is tenable only if an outside of the structure is assumed, an assumption which is untenable within the structuralist model.

Raymond Williams was one of the keenest critics to realize that the structuralist turn in Marxist criticism is fraught with serious limitations. Although himself highly critical of the Classical Marxist reflectionist theory, he also criticized the tendency to abandon all theories of determination. Structuralism's privileging synchrony over diachrony leads to imagining base and superstructure as two rather autonomous realms. Having conceived culture as the exclusive domain of thought, language and meaning, Hall virtually abandoned any theory of cultural determination. His decision to do so is perhaps an indication of the very inability of cultural studies to resolve the problem of determinacy and secure a surer footing for any emancipatory political programme.

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# Subversion in the Testimonies of the Women of Sistren

*Debabrata Bagui*

Sistren, a cultural organization of independent women, was engaged in developing the awareness of its audiences on the issues related to Caribbean women. Sistren that means 'sisters', grew out of the initiative of working-class women in 1977 and explored the lives of women of Caribbean, from which they wrote plays, workshops and screen prints. *Lionheart Gal* is the distillation of Jamaican women's experiences in fifteen compelling testimonies from this Sistren Theatre Collective. The Sistren group was known for unveiling the arduous reality of day to day life the Caribbean women confront and addressing issues of gender and class, sexuality, violence, ageing, women's history and their creations. The stories of *Lionheart Gal* can be read individually as descriptions of the difficulties faced by the women and their struggle with them; engrossing accounts that are gloomy, moving, disheartening, but sometimes hilarious and even inspiring.

Honor Ford-Smith introduces the book in minute detail, as an album of fifteen accounts of the ways in which women of the Sistren group have "come to terms with difficulties in their personal lives" as they move "from girlhood to adulthood, country to city, isolated individual experiences to a more politicized collective awareness" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith 2005: xiii). But the most unique feature of the book is the manner of the narrating: the wealth of personal and contemporary detail and the uncompromising employment of Jamaican Creole that makes the texts the nearest scribal equivalent to orature. To represent vernacular pronunciation and phrasing standard orthography has been adapted.



*Lionheart Gal* is a collection of testimonials. Honor Ford-Smith interviews the members of the Jamaican Sistren women's collective, tape-records their folk-tales, transcribes and edits them to form an anthology of fictionalized autobiographical stories narrated in Jamaican Creole. The editor remarks that for Jamaican women, it is often extremely liberating to begin to write and read in the language of Creole. A neocolonist legacy of denigrating 'patwah' still continues in Jamaica. The use of 'patwah' in the text shows "the refusal of a people to imitate a coloniser," observes Ford-Smith, and "their insistence on creation, their movement from obedience towards revolution. Not to nurture such a language is to retard the imagination and power of the people who created it"(p. xxix). "Writing in dialect, with its improvised spelling and immediate flavor, the women learned to write a form of English that had previously been considered "bad, coarse, vulgar. . . .By writing a language that had hitherto been that of a non-literate people, the women broke silence" (Ford-Smith 1985: 88). The editor has created this new spelling of 'patwah' herself in order to differentiate it from more frequently used spelling 'patois', and shows the connection between language and power relations as well as class in Jamaican society. People belonging to working class often cannot write 'patwah' which they speak and use mostly for entertainment purposes, and not for serious writing; and the schism between the oral and the literate cultures increases. These two dimensions have been brought together in the use of oral testimony, which itself forms a part of oral tradition, as the basis of Sistren's written stories.

Since the colonial process itself starts in language, one of the fundamental sites of struggle for postcolonial discourse is language. The most powerful mechanism of cultural hegemony is the control over language by the imperial centre. Dislocating native languages, establishing itself as a 'standard' against variants that are constituted as 'impurities', or setting up the language of empire in a new place are the various means to achieve this target. Among the several reactions to the dominance of the sovereign language, the two that present themselves directly in the process of decolonization are rejection or subversion. The adaptation of the

'standard' language to the demands and necessities of the place and society into which it has been appropriated becomes a subtle refutation of the political power of the 'standard' language. The appropriation of the language is essentially a subversive strategy. Through adaptation of the foreign language to the requirements of a mother grammar, structure, vocabulary, and by providing a form to the variations of the speaking voice, writers and speakers create an 'english' that becomes a very different linguistic vehicle from the received standard colonial English. The procedure of language adaptation establishes a medium that dissolves the notion of a standard language and inducts the 'marginal' variations of language use as the authentic network of a particular language. The determination to use the language as an ethnographic tool has been a common response of post-colonial writers.

Kamau Brathwaite has viewed the relationship between language and culture, which for him are largely synonymous in his studies of the language from Caribbean. He emphasizes that the English used there is in fact Creole English, which is a mixture of English and an adaptation that English took in the new environment there when it became mixed with other imported languages. This is complemented by what he calls 'Nation Language', the Africanized kind of English used by people brought to Caribbean, not today's official English, but the languages of labourers, slaves and servants who were brought in by the conquistadors and in which the survivals of African languages can be detected. What these languages had to do, Brathwaite argues, was to submerge themselves, since officially the conquering peoples did not wish to hear people speaking Ashanti or any of the Congolese languages (Brathwaite 1985: 309). This caused the 'submergence' of these languages and a status of inferiority conferred upon them and their users. When expressed, this language can be most empoweringly subversive, especially within Caribbean society where middleclass attitudes about 'proper speech' still prevail.

Brathwaite observes, Nation Language, very often, "is in an English which is like a howl, or a shout, or a machine-gun or the wind or a wave. It is also like the blues. And sometimes it is English



and African at the same time" (Brathwaite: 311). English it may be in terms of its lexicon, but it is not English in terms of its syntax. And English it certainly not in terms of its rhythm and timbre, its own sound explosion. In its contours it is not English (Brathwaite: 311). When Sistren make use of 'patwah,' they are tapping what Brathwaite sees as the subversive potential in language: "Nation Language" as "strategy," when "the slave is forced to use a certain kind of language," says Brathwaite, "in order to disguise himself [sic], to disguise his personality and to retain his culture" (Brathwaite 2004: 394). In its linguistic choice of patwah and in its formal choice of written stories based on oral testimony, *Lionheart Gal* challenges the neocolonial linguistic prejudices still prevalent in postcolonial societies. The issue of language choice has become important in the expression of identity and nationhood as well as in the desire to depict the lives of working class women and the ways in which they would express themselves.

Brathwaite argues that the educational system of the Caribbean recognized only the "language of the conquistadors – the language of the planters, the language of the official, the language of the Anglican preacher" (Brathwaite: 310). But British literature and English literary forms "had very little to do, really, with the environment and the reality of the Caribbean" (Brathwaite 1993: 262). "[w]hat English has given us as a model of poetry ... is the pentameter" (Brathwaite 2004: 389), but he argues, the "hurricane does not roar in pentameter" (Brathwaite: 390). The problem, for him, is how to get "a rhythm that approximates the natural experience, the environmental experience" (Brathwaite: 389), that "more closely and intimately approaches our own experiences" (Brathwaite: 392). The solution he finds is 'Nation Language' where Jamaican working class people finds "total expression" of their feelings. He talks of a different rhythm (the calypso 'employs dactyls') of this 'Nation Language' (Brathwaite: 395), rather than the iambic pentameter which is integral to canonical English literature. He distinguishes 'Nation Language' from dialect, a term that is often used pejoratively.

The stories of *Lionheart Gal* effectively expose female roles, such as the nurturing mother and the romanticizing of peasant life, as well as sexuality and violence. In her Introduction Ford-Smith explicitly draws the connection between "a legacy of tale-telling which has always preserved the history of Caribbean women" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xv) and the stories in *Lionheart Gal*. The stories of Ni, according to Honor Ford-Smith, "form a kind of bedrock of consciousness of female resistance among Jamaicans" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xv). Ni derives her power from "the tradition of the Ohemaa (the Ashanti Queen-Mother); on the control which African women had over agriculture in Maroon society" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xiv). Although historians dispute Ni's existence and 'reduce' her to mythical status—one who possessed magical powers as one who "bounced bullets off her bottom or caught them and threw them back" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xv)—all such "image-laden tales live on," remarks Ford-Smith, "offering an inspirational code for the struggles of women in the region" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xv). Besides Ni, the warrior-woman, there is Nanny, the domesticated servant, who in Ford-Smith's provocative analysis is only a 'tamed' version of Ni: in fact, "behind the familiar image of the domesticated nanny lurks the eternal Ni" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xiv). According to Ford-Smith, such an analysis demands from the readers, to look carefully at the "ways in which ordinary women have determined their own struggles for themselves and the ways in which they have assessed their own victories and defeats" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xiv-xv).

The story 'Rebel Pickney' begins with, "All my life me live in fear" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: 3). The common feeling in all the various acts of childhood is a fear of patriarchal reprimand and punishment. The narrative ends with a comforting image of the benevolent mother as a foil to the father's severity, an adult critical assessment of child physical abuse and a call for better parenting. Betty, in this story, stands as the quintessential female revolutionary of the Caribbean, spearheading revolt against colonial authority. Ford-Smith, in her introduction, suggests the replication, in the story,



of the image of Nanny, the maroon leader of the eighteenth century whose opposition to the English was so great that the colonial authorities were forced to grant her and her runaway community a sizable, autonomous land grant. Betty, in the spirit of Nannny, becomes the very personification of Jamaican revolt against tyranny.

A decoding of the ordinary tales of ordinary women, as the stories in *Lionheart Gal* demonstrate, enables both the storyteller and the audience/reader to "release the power contained in images and create a basis for political action" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xvi). The testimonies/stories draw upon the power in "the tale-telling tradition," which has always been "one of the places where the most subversive elements of our history can be safely lodged," notes Ford-Smith (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xv):

> These tales encode what is overtly threatening to the powerful into covert images of resistance so that they can live on in times when overt struggles are impossible or build courage in moments when it is. To create such tales is a collective process accomplished within a community bound by a particular historical purpose. The tales and the process of making them suggest the possibility of a unity between the aesthetic imagination and the social and political process. They suggest an altering or re-defining of the parameters of political process and action.
>
> Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xv-xvi

This "altering or re-defining of the parameters of political process and action" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xv - xvi) starts from within the women's own lives. Many of the stories show, often with bitterness, the complicity, ironically enough, of mothers keeping their adolescent daughters ignorant about their female bodies. The mystifications of "let no boy trouble you" hardly prepare teenage girls for the facts of life. Or, as the narrator in 'Rock Stone A River Bottom No Know Sun Hot' is told when she first gets her period: "Yuh turn big woman now... If yuh have anyting fi do wid a man, yuh wi get pregnant" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: 49). The

narrator herself admits that she knows "notten bout pregnant" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: 50). Several stories poignantly depict the surprise, shock, and sense of betrayal by one's female body. However, there is a remarkable lack of sentimentality in the women's reporting of their personally painful experiences. In fact, in their own lives they insist on a demystification of female sexuality and on open discussions of these issues with their daughters. Ketu Katrak finds here a positive rechanneling of history, not a hopeless repetition of the mothers' destinies being repeated on their daughters (Katrak 1989: 177). In the story 'Me Own Two Hand', the narrator says:

> Me try me best fi siddung and talk to her [daughter] and show her di difficulty of pregnancy and relationships wid men. Ah show her di part dat can be good too. ... It no mek no sense fi have sex as no secret.
>
> Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith:154

The stories, in general, also demystify the stereotypical mother-daughter relationships. 'Rock Stone A River Bottom No Know Sun Hot' portrays an intimate closeness between mother and daughter. The mother counsels her daughter/narrator: "Be independent. Depend upon yuh own income" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: 66), along with a mystification about sex: "Member seh man a green lizard. Man is a ting weh change. Di instant when dem see one next woman, dem no waan bodder deal wid yuh" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: 65). When the daughter becomes pregnant by "a black man! Wid rolly-polly black pepper head," Mama loses all self-control and wants nothing to do with "dat deh pickney" because "di faada not even have lickle colour" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: 72). The narrator places this 'personal' issue in a broader sociopolitical structure of color discrimination in Caribbean society, which her mother confronted and which convinced her that "Di colour a yuh skin a di colour a yuh mind" (Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: 69).

Part oral-history research, part literature, *Lionheart Gal* transcends traditional classification, and exemplifies the concept of 'oraliture' at its best. Thirteen of the fifteen stories are based on oral testimony/interview that records working-class women's conversational language. The 'oral tradition' or 'orality', i.e. the "tradition of the spoken word" is one of the essential characteristics of 'Nation Language', as pointed out by Brathwaite. He explains:

> Reading is an isolated individualistic expression. The oral tradition, on the other hand, makes demands not only on the poet but also on the audience to complete the community: the noise and sounds that the poet makes are responded to by the audience and are returned to him. Hence we have the creation of a continuum where the meaning truly resides. And this total expression comes about people live in the open air, because people live in the condition of poverty, because people come from a historical experience where had to rely on their own breath patterns rather than on paraphernalia like books and museums. They had to depend on immanence, the power within themselves, rather than the technology outside themselves.
>
> Brathwaite 1995: 312

*Lionheart Gal*, therefore, subverts the traditional generic periphery between the oral and scribal tradition, between literature and social document, between autobiography and fiction. Its form articulates a feminist subversion of the authority of the literary text as fiction, "as transformative rewriting of the self in the *persona* of distanced, divine omniscience" (Cooper 2005: 169). Here the question of editorial intervention comes to the fore. Evelyn O'Callaghan argues:

> The life stories related in *Lionheart Gal* stand somewhere between fiction and research data. These stories have been so shaped by selection, editing, rewriting and publication that they have become to a large extent 'fictionalised'.
>
> O'Callaghan 1987: 93

The distinction between story and text, between narrative autonomy and ideological necessity is crucial to the question of authorship and authority in *Lionheart Gal*.

The structural features of the stories of *Lionheart Gal* demand reading the narratives through the lens of *testimonios* rather than as autobiographies. The genre of *testimonio*, can be defined as:

> a novel or novella-length narrative, told in the first person by a narrator who is the actual protagonist or witness of the events she or he recounts. The unit of narration is usually a life or significant life episode (e.g. the experience of being a prisoner). Since in many cases the narrator is someone who is either functionally illiterate or, if literate, not a professional writer or intellectual, the production of the *testimonio* generally involves the recording and/or transcription and editing of an oral account by an interlocutor who is a journalist, writer, or social activist. The word suggests the act of testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense.
>
> Beverly & Zimmerman 1990: 173

Some critics have claimed rather forcefully for the connection between *testimonio* and place—as a genre of as-told-to life narratives that developed and flourished in Latin America, especially in the 1960s, beginning with Miguel Barnet's *Biography of a Runaway Slave*, a transcription of the life of the 105-year-old Cuban ex-slave Esteban Montejo. Although Barnet invented the term *testimonio* with the publication of Montejo's account, in fact this format had existed long before the 1960s. Indeed as Raymond Williams has pointed out, there is a long history of oral autobiography by oppressed people that is not limited to Latin America (Beverly 1993: 71).

What do we gain by treating the narratives of *Lionheart Gal* as *testimonios*? For one thing, it addresses the simultaneity of form and voice. As a genre that transgresses the boundaries between the public and the private, *testimonio*



> is placed at the intersection of multiple roads: oral vs. literary; authored/authoritarian discourse vs. edited discourse; literature vs. anthropology; ... autobiography vs. demography; the battle of representationality; the canon debate; 'masterpiece' of literature vs. minority writing...
>
> Gugelberger 1996: 10-11

*Testimonios*—unlike most classic autobiographies—do not merely concentrate on the inner self, but also draws on communal experience. What's more, *testimonio* allows a focus on the multiplicity of subjectivities at work in the text without sacrificing the authority of these narratives. In reading these narratives as *testimonios*, the reader can emphasize their complex dialogic nature and to move the focus of discussion from the implicit individualism often implied in autobiography.

For example, one key feature of the *testimonio* genre is the floating 'I'. It means the 'I' has the grammatical status of what linguists call a 'shifter', a linguistic function that can be assumed indiscriminately by anyone; it is not just the uniqueness of her self or her experience but its ability to stand for the experience of her community as a whole. The editor of *Lionheart Gal* writes:

> The women who speak these stories are not unique. The stories are representative experiences of ordinary women speaking about the effort of making something of their lives and reflecting concerns which are common to many women in their society. Their lives show how women are actively creating solutions, that they are not passively awaiting outside agitators to 'stir them up' into action.
>
> Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xxx

Like *testimonio*, the accounts of *Lionheart Gal* are atrocity narratives that document trauma and strategies of survival. The speakers function as the witnesses to the sufferings of women of working class, and call upon readers to undertake "rhetorical listening",

(Hesford 2004: 104-44), as secondary witnesses. In the genre of *testimonio* rhetorical listening is central since it is not only about reception of texts. Trauma of the kind *Lionheart Gal* describes cannot simply be remembered: it calls upon the listener to react in certain ways. The readers need to keep the event 'open' that entails, "experiencing the trauma of someone else's story and communicating it in a way that keeps it traumatic *for others*" (Berlant 2001: 41-58). The writing goes on from a lived experience of poverty, violence, rejection and suffering. 'Trauma' conventionally refers to the destruction of subjects and the self (Herman 1992: 51). But, as Cathy Caruth maintains, "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (Caruth 1996: 58), and is what the narratives of *Lionheart Gal* achieves. They expose the structure of traumatic experience while also gesturing at the ways in which the victims have fought, overcome and survived the events. The life-writings of *Lionheart Gal* are about the reconstruction of the selves after the traumatic experiences in the lives of the narrators.

In most cases *testimonio* narratives are documents of pain and sufferings, bringing one into contact with the victimized. Such narratives have been called 'out-law' genre that, as Caren Kaplan says, disrupts literary conventions and constitutes resistance literature in postcolonial societies (Kaplan 1992: 122-3). In the 'Introduction' to *Lionheart Gal*, Smith identifies women's reaction to oppression as a "rebel consciousness":

> The stories [in *Lionheart Gal* ] chart the terms of resistance in women's daily lives and illustrate ways in which women can move from the apparent powerlessness of exploitation to the creative power of rebel consciousness.
>
> Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith: xiii

In Smith's usage, "rebel consciousness" refers to women who refuse to be controlled. Women's awareness of their marginality and their willingness to fight back demonstrates a "rebel consciousness," as revealed in the narratives of *Lionheart Gal*, a collection that speaks of the experiences of women who survive and fight because history and circumstances have put no other option before them.

*Testimonio* represents an affirmation of the individual subject by giving voice to the voiceless while stressing the connection of that individual voice to a group marked by marginalization, oppression and struggle (Beverly 1996: 35). These plural relationships of identification help an understanding of subjectivity as "internally fissured, available simultaneously for different contexts" (Sommer 1996: 155), in which the Creole subjects of these narratives—like the collective subjects of *testimonio*—disturb and challenge the "hegemonic autobiographical pose of Western Autobiography" (Sommer: 146). The multiplicity signaled by the polyvocality of the Creole testimony of Jamaican women illuminates the complexity of the narrative form employed.

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# The Cultural Catholicism of Graham Greene

*Tasleem Ahmad War*

A cultural catholic is an individual who belongs to the Roman Catholic Church but observes the religion's practices as a cultural tradition rather than a spiritual exercise. Cultural Catholics may not fully understand the theology that informs the religion's rituals, or may reject part or most of the theology as outdated or irrelevant in modern life. Cultural Catholics may attend mass less than several times a year or may not practice their religion at all, but still regard their association with the Catholic Church as a defining aspect of their identity. Cultural Catholics regard the sacraments of the Catholic Church as important milestones in life, without necessarily attaching any spiritual significance to the events. Thomas Groome, a renowned theologian at Boston College wrote a book *What makes us Catholic* (2002) in which he outlines the features of cultural Catholicism. Among them, two features of great relevance to authenticate the thesis of my argument. They are (1) A positive reading of human nature and (2) Horizontal understanding of Catholicism. The argument of this paper is that Greene is one such writer in the twentieth century who invests the term culture with religious meanings, that is to say, he desecularises culture. For Greene, culture itself is a primary condition of religiosity. He compliments the abstract dogmatic nature of Catholicism by exposing the thorough cultural basis of any meaningful religiosity. His characters, settings etc reveal his obsession with the suffering, squalor and conflict, features that arise from his awareness of the concrete nature of human life. He refuses to acknowledge the Catholic dogmatic idealism because for him the human reality is



primarily cultural. Religion for him has two sides, two aspects of transcendence and immanence. This transcendence and immanence coalesce in the drama of human existence. Immanence is thoroughly cultural. Man's encounter with the world of matter implies involvement in the temporal/ immanent. But it is Greene's conviction that Transcendence is impossible without Immanence that makes his art highly striking. The traditional Catholic binarism spirit/matter, nature/culture, transcendent/immanent, with the implied privileging of the former terms, is abandoned in favour of a new paradigm. Cultural Catholicism though, is a deeply humanized version of religion, it nonetheless preserves the sanctity of the transcendental as the source of meaning in life.

This cultural catholicism is an attempt to synthesize the larger humanistic concerns made possible only by the modern age and the deeply embedded religious concerns. Cultural catholicism withstands the pressure of secularization as much as it resists any conflation with the traditional catholic dogma. It is Greene's answer to the two equally opposite destructive tendencies of dogmatism and secularization. For our purposes, it is Greene's conviction that religion is possible only through an understanding of culture as the other facet of the transcendental. In other words, Greene collapses the binarism of culture/religion by showing that the latter can exist only in and through the former. In the current age of cultural relativism, this paradigm offers for Greene a better prospect for humanity. Culture for Greene is not a substitute to religion as for Arnold. Neither can there be anything as acultural ahistorical religion.

Greene's conversion to catholicism did not occur in a vacuum and the simple rejoinder that Greene converted to marry Vivien belies the complex manner in which catholicism engaged Greene's interpretation of life throughout his long literary career. The preoccupations of his religious imagination is illustrative of the dilemmas that have formed the consciousness of much of the twentieth century and his vision is always in dialogue with the cultural and political world in which he found himself. Catholicism in the years immediately after World War II, underwent an

unprecedented resurgence in popularity because it seemed a refuge of order, discipline and metaphysical meaning to a generation devastated by war, the Holocaust and the atomic bomb. Post war catholicism had retained its idealized and nostalgic sense of its medieval culture, a time when "the church possessed a monopoly of cultural definition, when social institutions embodied and confirmed its world view and ethos". The Second Vatican council positively engaged the insights of the enlightenment and liberal protestant tradition by accepting historical and hermeneutical methods to articulate their faith. The effect was to place Catholicism at the center of a constellation of philosophical, political and social movements of the mid-twentieth century in a manner that eschewed its previous triumphal, pre-modern and often fortress mortality. It was a decisive shift in the way in which the church understood itself and its mission in the world.

This shift is seen markedly in the language of the council. The emphasis is on a continual humanistic inner renewal of the church centered on the following themes: the acceptance of historical consciousness in the articulation of the church's history and doctrine: the importance of an active role for the laity: the spirit of détente between the church and the modern world, the modification of the church's identity beyond clerical institutional and hierarchical terms to the more inclusive term "people of god": the renewal in liturgical and devotional practices: the effort at interreligious dialogue: the clear affirmation of religious freedom to worship according to one's conscience: the stress on human rights as fundamental to religious faith. The rhetoric of reproach so prevalent in previous council was replaced with the rhetoric of affirmation and invitation. Dialogue became the buzzword of the Council, and as the Church historian John W.O'Malley suggest, "dialogue is horizontal not vertical, and it implies, if it is to be taken seriously, a shift in ecclesiology more basic than any single passage or image." As a result of these developments, Greene represents a more nuanced catholic ideological discourse in his late novels. There is a decidedly different feel to Greene's novels from this later period, a refashioning of the religious tensions of the classical catholic genre. *The Honorary Consul* and *Monsignor Quixote* offer the most explicit examples of such theological development-the theology of evolutionary convergence, the historical significance of Jesus in evaluating moral agency, the dialogical nature of faith and belief, and the medium of God on the horizontal plane of human affection and commitment-all amply portrayed. His late novels offer a fresh perspective in which to chart how the discourse of Catholicism adds a surplus of meaning beyond the merely political, economic and cultural ideologies that pervade much of literary criticism.

As a cultural catholic, Greene held a positive view of human nature which happens to be one of the features of cultural Catholicism, according to Thomas Groome. Greene makes an intense and deep introspection into human nature and consequently the characters in his novels seem abounding with emotions of pity, love and sympathy. He lays his heart bare in the novels like *The Power and the Glory* and *The Human Factor.* These two novels bear testimony to Greene's positive view of human nature. The major and minor characters in both these novels depict the emotions of pity, love and sympathy. In *The Human Factor*, Maurice Castle is involved in a security leak and thus in a sense betrays his own country. This betrayal becomes unbearably hateful and disgusting as one of his fellow colleague Davis is suspected for his treachery and is mercilessly killed by the organization. Maurice Castle is responsible for his death because it is Maurice who is the actual culprit. But Greene's detached and disinterested portrayal of Castle does not leave any scope for hatred; he seems to be amiable character instead. Greene makes us to penetrate deeply into the heart of Maurice Castle and the realization invokes our sympathy that Castle does not leak the secrets either for financial benefit or political gain or for any other materialistic benefit. It is merely for the internal satisfaction he wants to feel after doing something for the nation his wife belongs to and to pay back to those people who helped him to escape safely with his wife Sarah from south Africa. At the death of Davis, he is terribly moved and calls it a murder. Realizing the pain, loneliness and hollowness in Daintry's life, he is sympathetic to the extent that he wants to open himself to Daintry to raise the latter's position in job. *The Power and the Glory* also upholds

Greene's positive view of human nature and expresses his faith in humanity. Due to outlawing of Roman Catholicism, he has fallen to alcoholism and a chance intimacy with a woman makes him a father of a child. Haunted by loneliness, frustration and despair, he wanders from place to place in search of peace and security. Despite all his degradation and corruption, the priest willingly endangers his own safety to pursue a call for duty to hear confessions, to provide absolution. He is painfully conscious of his guilt or unworthiness, and that makes him pray:

> Oh God forgive me. I am a proud, lustful greedy man. I have loved authority so much. These people are martyrs-protecting me with their own lives. They deserve a martyr to care for them not a fool like me, who loves all the wrong things. (1940:162)

He attains noble heights with the realization that one must love every soul as if it were one's own child. Thus Greene becomes an exponent of the philosophy that personal love must be extended up to human love, this realization transcends, emancipates and glorifies the human soul. The awareness of his sins was his first step to move towards god. When he is in a prison cell, the old woman recognizes him and outbursts "Think we have a martyr here". (1940:163) The Priest giggles and says:

I do not think martyrs are like this...Martyrs are holy men. I have done things I could only whisper them in the confessions...My children you must never think that the holy martyrs are like me. You have a name for me. Oh! I've heard you used it before. I am a Whisky Priest. (1940:163)

None but a saint can be so candid and bold. He is one of those rare people whose words are followed by deeds. Before he is shot, he repents thus, "I have done nothing for any body, I might just as well have never lived". (1940:273) The novel shows "an absolute integration of religious doctrine and human feeling".(1957:124) The last thoughts in the mind of Whisky Priest present a true estimate of his character, unraveling his heart that was overwhelming with softer emotions for the common people.



Thus the two characters Maurice and Whisky Priest corroborate the claim that Green held a positive view of human nature and his understanding of human nature goes beyond the clerical, institutional and hierarchical terms.

Greene's fiction reflects his humanism, his feeling for and recognition of the world of man. His art is humanistic in content and universal in form. It shows that artist's ceaseless struggle, his grappling with an intractable world, in everything; technique and outlook, Greene is human. His fiction communicates his own life experience which is also the life experience of the struggling, suffering humanity. Greene's outlook on life is sustained by "those well springs of humanism that have nourished our society in the past".(1951:132) He reaffirms the positive human values and reasserts in clear and unequivocal terms the need for a moral life. He believes in the dignity of man. Like all humanists he is committed to the defense of humanity. What W.W. Robson has said of humanism as a literary criterion applies squarely to Graham Greene:

Our feeling about this profound and absolute sincerity of the author is an essential part of our recognition of his full humanity. (1964:57)

We find that Greene has come of age towards the end of his career for his novels highlight that he has really understood the essential truth and quintessence of Christianity. Thus his understanding of Christianity could be summed up in the following way:

Christianity and Humanism are not opposites. Christians can be humanists and humanists can be Christians....Christianity cannot properly be understood except as radical humanism. (1988:224)

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# The Notion of the Nation in the Indian English Novel: A Study of Aravid Adiga's *The White Tiger*

***Iffat Maqbool***

The elasticity of the term postcolonial having been by now established, an uncritical acceptance of the term seems at once limited and limiting. The traditional usage of the term has given way to revisionary and radical readings of the concept, highlighting the omissions and gaps inherent in a singular definition of the term. One postcolonial category that has come in for scrutiny is the idea of nationalism or nationhood. Since its inception, postcolonialism has been permeated with such terminology as 'retrieval', 'resistance' making the notion of a defining nationhood central to postcolonial discourse. The idea of the nation as a homogenous construct erasing out differences and inequalities has gone a long way in shaping national histories. That postcolonial literature's prime aim has been to imagine and perpetuate a totalizing nationalism to counter the imperial "other" is by now a truism. But it is equally evident that discriminations and inequalities embedded in national histories and cultures do not fall within the "aims and objectives" of a uniform nationalism. Instead, such imaginings or conceptualisations often articulate a utopian domain, rendering subaltern identities invisible.

Although the Indian English novel has been amazing for its multiple engagements and diverse thematics, it is interesting to scrutinize the role of this genre in shaping the national imaginary. The earliest trio of Mulk Raj Anand, R K Narayan and Raja Rao are unanimously acknowledged as the founding fathers of a nascent nationalism in league with the political climate of their time.

However, a nuanced scrutiny of these writers reveals instances of exclusivist biases and culture-specific interests. A writer like Raja Rao is conspicuous for his promotion of a majoritarian nationalism as the representative one, ignoring the compellingly complex and myriad nature of Indian nationhood. Rumina Sethi in her book *Myths of the Nation* (1999) singles out Raja Rao for fashioning an Indian identity that is part imagination and part manoeuvre, never convincing and objective. Defining Raja Rao's brand of cultural nationalism as a "selective" and "partial" category, a text like *Kanthapura* is then an unhappy example of propagating a mythic notion of "Indianness" based on the peculiarities of a single culture and its attendant discourse. While the novel does well to "nativise" English and privilege "local" culture vis-a-vis the imperial "other", it simultaneously advocates the hegemonic and homogenising idea of an ideal mythical India, in the process obviating diversity and minority identity.

Rao is the arch example of that brand of cultural artists who romanticize/eulogize history and politics to propagate India more as an "Idea" or "metaphysic" ,ignoring the heterogeneous fabric of the Indian nation. To him " India is not a country. It is a perspective, a darshana, a play in the dance of the absolute"(Rao 1960:380 ).This is not so much a way of apprehending reality but a kind of mystification unsuited to modern Indian realities. He heightens the "Idea of India" to a huge metaphor beyond the gravitational pull of the actual, obscuring plurarity and complexity.

Such cultural stereotyping only encourages distortions of an otherwise culturally fragmented and politically heterogeneous country like India. Modern Indian social and political realities on the other hand belie any notion of a universal benign nationalism. A perceptive analysis of this rupture is well argued by Tabish Khair in his study of Indian English fiction, *Babu Fictions*.

He makes an interesting bifurcation between the Indian English Novelist who is a "Babu"-urban, elite, westernised, Brahminical and the "Coolie"—non-English speaking, economically deprived, culturally marginalised—the Indian reality that the Babu



claims to represent. He points out that the Indian English novel particularly in the hands of Raja Rao, R K Narayan et al necessarily writes itself from a position of power occluding subaltern or coolie realities and discourses. Since the Coolie and the Babu classes are separated both socio-economically and linguistically, the hegemonic narration that must ensue denies both agency and voice to the subaltern classes. Khair diagnoses the situation: "Indian English fiction *is* Babu fiction, while India itself...presents a huge and heterogenous Coolie and non-Babu population"(Khair 2005:X). A typical babu fiction is then inevitably alienated from the reality it claims to represent. Khair suggests that the corrective lies in "the necessity to empower the subaltern, question centric discourses, stretch the canvas and scope of Indian English fiction in a non-hegemonic manner and at its most extreme even put forward a sustained claim for Indian English fiction as neither essentialist nor discursively alien to most (non-babu) Indians"(Khair 2005:XV).

And this is where Aravind Adiga comes in. *The White Tiger*, his debut novel has almost gate-crashed into the canon of the Indian English Novel. Viewed against the preceding account, it is an extraordinary oppositional text, one that with its severe lashing out at the notion of the modern Indian state and endowing a remarkable identity and voice to its central protagonist, the "lowly" Balram Halwai ultimately makes a case for subaltern identity.

Through its depiction of an urban dystopia, it subverts the eulogizing and therefore misleading concept of modern Indian nationhood. The novel problematizes any facile notion of a homogenous benign Nationalism and achieves this by revisiting the category that has been consistently left out of elite versions of Indian nationhood. The subaltern (Mulk Raj Anand excluded) has never been so forcefully represented in modern Indian fiction. Through its central character and narrator, Balram Halwai, the Subaltern at last speaks for himself in the novel. The novel does not as much empathise with the subaltern, neither does it reveal it as an ethical "Other" that demands attention but here the Indian English novel for the first time *belongs* to the subaltern. Instead of a charitable attitude towards the oppressed class, the novel brutally expresses

the pain and anger that a voiceless, nameless and faceless group is capable of.

Angst- driven, the novel viewed through the perspective of the countless marginalized passive citizenry of India, is an ace specimen of a counter- text that deconstructs progressively the "The Idea of India" and reveals the inadequacies and disjunctions that beset the country. Adiga ruthlessly and relentlessly exposes the gross injustices and contradictions rampant in modern India.

The theme of the novel is the brutal 'growing up' of its central protagonist Balram Halwai, a village kid with promise and talent, who one day aspires to go beyond the "Darkness"–Adiga's metaphor for the vast population that is rural India-poor, destitute, illiterate, faceless into the "Light"–another correspondent metaphor for the metropolitan Indian city- rich, educated, glamorous, privileged, ruthless. Balram Halwai, a specimen of the Wretched of India(to borrow Fanon's metaphor)-that majority of nameless, faceless, underprivileged Indians who lead sub-human lives while a small percentage of Indians waltz away to self-deluding slogans of "India Shining" and "Mere Bharat Mahaan", mere exploitative jargon as Adiga reveals the discrepancies and incongruities of India's project of "modernity". The novel essentially works on the basic metaphoric distinction between the "Darkness" and the "Light". The myth of development is shattered as the heart of the darkness -the Indian village is revealed it its most candid and honest manner: "I am proud to inform you that Laxmangarh is your typical Indian village paradise, adequately supplied with electricity, running water and working telephones; and that the children of my village, raised on a nutritious diet of meat, eggs, vegetables, and lentils will be found, when examined with tape measure and scales to match up to the minimum height and weight standards set by the United nations and other organizations whose treaties our prime minister has signed and whose forums he so regularly and pompously attends.

Electricity poles-defunct

Water tap-broken



Children-too lean and short for their age, and with over-sized heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India(Adiga 2008:19).

India's forays into a western-style modernity while it simultaneously and regressively clings to backward-looking social inequalities and injustices is critiqued in a brilliant manner. Adiga progressively deconstructs the great symbols of modern India-The Idyllic village, Indian Democracy, The Great Indian Election, Capitalism-all categories are revealed in their full horror. Adiga shows how the Indian programme of capitalist modernity has sharpened social and political inequalities and conflicts.

Balram Halwai's big chance comes when he is hired as a chauffeur for Mr. Ashok, a specimen of the landlord class and Balram's alter-ego in the novel.The moral transition of Balram Halwai from fumbling village kid into ruthless entrepreneur is rendered with such power and insight that a reviewer hails Balram as the most inimitable narrators of the millennium. The sinister corruption that he undergoes at the hands of the seductive modern Indian city reaches a chilling climax when he kills his way into "success". In many ways an Indianised unredeemed Pip(*Great Expectations*-Dickens),Balram Halwai pays the ultimate price for "going up" in life- his humanity. Through Mr. Ashok and Pinky madam, Adiga caricatures the modern Indian city's gross attempts at an American style modernity, disastrously at war with actual social and political (mal)practices. As Balram enters into a Mephistophelian bargain with the city, he becomes a metaphor for the ruthless Indian entrepreneur a true denizen of the silicon success story that is Bangalore. Adiga underscores the rupture between the light and the darkness in the following manner: "India is two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness"(Adiga 2008:14).The Urban-Rural divide or the Babu-Coolie divide was never more passionately rendered. He de-mythicises in the process one of the most enduring symbols of Indian nationhood-the river Ganga: "One fact about India is that you can take almost anything you hear about the country from the prime minister and turn it upside down and then you will have the truth about that thing. Now you have heard the Ganga

called the river of emancipation, and hundreds of American tourists come each year to take photographs of naked sadhus at haridwar or Benaras, and our prime minister will no doubt describe it that way to you, and urge you to take a dip in it. No! Mr. Jiabao, I urge you not to take a dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of faces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids."(Adiga 2008:15)

Adiga's ruthless expose' of the gross injustices and malpractices rampant in rural and urban India is in agreement with Sunil Khilnani who in his book *The Idea of India* quotes B R Ambedhkar to bring home this very point: "On the 26 of January 1950 we are going to enter a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality...in our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure continue to deny the principle of one man one value....". (Khilnani 2004:35).

Balram's narrative is 'told' in the form of a series of letters to the Chinese premier Wen Jiabao: "Mr premier, the little take-home pamphlet that you will be given by the prime minister will no doubt contain a very large section on the splendour of democracy in India-the awe-inspiring spectacle of one billion people casting their votes to determine their own future, in full freedom of franchise, and so on and so forth. We may not have sewage, drinking water and Olympic gold medals but we do have democracy.

If I were making a country id get the sewage pipes first then the democracy then id go about giving pamphlets and statues of Gandhi to other people. But what do I know 'im just a murderer (Adiga 2008:95,96)!

The Great Indian Election is ridiculed as an exercise in utter depravity and rampant corruption: the potential candidate has a total of "ninety three criminal cases for murder, rape, gun-smuggling, pimping and many other such minor offences are pending against him and his ministers at the present moment. Not easy to get convictions when the judges are sitting in darkness...The great socialist himself is said to have embezzled one billion rupees from



the Darkness, and transferred that money into a bank account in a small beautiful country in Europe full of white people and black money"(Adiga 2008:97,98).

The crushing statement about the actual participation of the backward and the oppressed is definitive: "I am India's most faithful voter and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth".(Adiga 2008:102)

Adiga diagnoses the servility of Indians particularly those belonging to the darkness as the main reason for perpetuating the masquerade that is Indian democracy: "Do you know about hanuman sir? He was the faithful servant of the god Rama, and we worship him in our temples because he is a shining example of how to serve your masters with absolute fidelity, love and devotion. These are the kinds of gods they have foisted on us...understand now how hard it is for a man to win his freedom in India."(Adiga 2008:19).In an Orwellian style, Adiga diagnoses the utter servitude of the Indian subaltern as chronic and vicious. Comparing the dumb millions of the country to the hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space...On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher...The greatest thing to come out of this country in the ten thousand years of its history is The Great Rooster Coop. The Great Indian Rooster Coop. Do you have something like it in China too? I doubt it, Mr. Jiabao. Or you wouldn't need the communist party to shoot people and a secret police to raid their houses at night and put them in a jail like I've heard you have over there. Here in India we have no dictatorship. No secret police. That's because we have the coop", a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse".(Adiga 2008:173,175,176)

The project of Indian modernity is critiqued to expose its insensitivity to social equality. Perhaps the imported form of modernity sits uncomfortably within the social imbalances endemic to India. Adiga posits the failure of the Indian national project for

its omissions and hasty embracing of ill-fitting concepts. Sunil Khilnani too critiques the ambivalent modernity of the Indian nation state: "The modernity created here exemplified fully the life of contradictions that India embraced the day it became a democratic republic. India's cities house the entire historical compass of human labour, from the crudest stone-breaking to the most sophisticated financial transactions. Success and failure, marble and mud are intimately and abruptly pressed against one another, and this has made the cities vibrate with agitated experience"(Khilnani 2004:109). The agitated experience of Balram Halwai is the heart of *The White Tiger*.

A novel like *The White Tiger* is precisely the kind of anti-fiction that the Indian English novel requires, a novel that dares to rethink the fictions of the nation.

Adiga is the perfect example of an oppositional writer, speaking pertinently of post-national realities. In this sense, *The White Tiger* could be read as a foundational text with a strong transformative potential, stressing the importance of an authentic nationalism against an invented one.

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# Transcending Geography, Nationality, and Culture: Fluctuating Postcolonial Identity in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*

***Ashu Vashisht***

Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* (1993), is an interesting work reflecting the story of a young man Sindi (Surrender) Oberoi, a man who envisions himself as a stranger wherever he goes or lives. Oberoi is born in Kenya, studies in the United States and England, and finally settles down in India. The hero's identity in the postcolonial context does not fall into any easy periodisation because his detachment transcends the barriers of Geography, Nationality and Culture. The immediate fall-out of this identity flux, with a picaresque orientation propels Oberoi from one crisis to another. In the entire process, different individuals get sucked into the vortex of his shifting, grappling postcolonial self, chief among them being June Blyth, a vivacious, irresistible and magnetic American girl with whom the hero experiences a short-lived but passionate affair. The other notable personages featuring in the narrative are Babu Rao Khemka, son of an Indian millionaire businessman, sent to the United States for higher studies, his father, Mr. Khemka, and his sister, Sheila Khemka. The role-playing matrix defines itself and gets determined by a chain of incidents which crowd the lives of Sindi, June and Babu, in the American city of Boston. In fact, the attractive June juxtaposes herself between two lovers Sindi and Babu which climaxes at the end of the novel in the form of her tragic death through an abortion. The East-West muddle in *The Foreigner* is rendered with a fine and delicate artistic vision which involves a labyrinth of complex attitudes and emotions. All through the narrative which zig-zags back and forth, flitting

intermittently across the fictional past and the present of the novel, the reader is treated to a feast of intensely moving details, arresting the attention compellingly. Sindi Oberoi's personal and human problems operate against the backdrop of different cultures and situations with the kind of a cosmopolitan ambience, something reminiscent of the delicate irresistible patterns witnessed in the works of Henry James like *The Bostonians, The American* and *The Ambassadors*.

As a highly readable book, *The Foreigner* displays a conscious technique and technical experimentation within the plot and the characterization. The entire novelistic narrative gets sequestered into three parts: Part I, II, and III and makes the aesthetics of postcolonialism a deconstructed polysemic. Sindi Oberoi's self-reflexive problematics regarding his idea of detachment gets reflected in his awareness of the perpetual tension between self-vs-self and self-vs-society. Oberoi's awareness as a postcolonial-self also becomes "a simultaneous awareness of a divided past and the inability to accept it as it has been presented, projected or interpreted." (Jain & Singh 2004: 14). The projection of a postcolonial quintessential identity vis-à-vis Sindi Oberoi, represents "a conflict within one's own self, a conflict through which the subject tries to step outside.... The western training... to approach his own past, history and reality from disposition." (Jain & Singh 2004: 14).

In the very beginning of the narrative Sindi Oberoi is shown as confronting a sepulchral situation. Oberoi is asked to identify the dead body of his friend, Babu Rao Khemka, a university student, who dies in a car-crash in Boston. Interestingly enough, it is in the wallet of the dead Khemka that the picture of the heroine, June Blyth, is found. She is informed about it and it is June who gives Oberoi some papers to sign. Sindi's meeting with June, as the narrative projects, is reflected in these words:

> After I signed the papers the girl asked if I wanted her to call a cab. I said I didn't know where I was going, so there was no point in getting a cab. (Joshi 1993: 8)



The hero's words, that he did not know where he was going and getting a cab was useless, imply "alienation from reason, society... a reduction of all engagements in the created world of men, perhaps abrogation of any communal existence." (Hassan 1970: 13). Oberoi's feelings at this stage in the novel's narrative emerge "out of reservoir of infinite peculiarity... a watcher, never involved, always detached, always ready for new examples... called 'bizarre jouissance'." (Tak 2004: 440). In Oberoi's self and his role in the novel as a man who finally settles down in India, "The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness" (Tak 2004: 440).

As a text of postmodernist and postcolonial problematics, *The Foreigner* presents the trials, tribulations and vexatious flirtations of human identity across continents and disparate cultures. It also incorporates a multiple split at several levels, a revelatory division of postcoloniality into the "home" and the "world," the separation between education and culture. Thanks to the author's innovative acumen, this novel, as a fictional text, virtually challenges the reader's intellect by the vacillating and oscillating pendulum of subjectivity, non-rationalism and difference. Sindi Oberoi's continental flirtations and the politics of location become valuable constructs both at personal and cultural levels. The hero's character gets infallibly deconstructed when Joshi applies the allied transformations in depicting Oberoi's postcolonial-cum-postmodernist "Drama" of the human self in flux.

Edward said in his ideas on "Crisis in Orientalism" argues that "Western Orientalism had created a binary opposition between the East and the West. While the West is rational, humane, and superior; the East is aberrant, underdeveloped and inferior." (Jain & Singh 2004: 89). In this kind of an observation where does Sindi Oberoi stand, a man who hops around continents and countries, traverses across western landscapes, and finally stages a comeback to his oriental abode. It is Oberoi's friendship with June and the intimacy between the two that forms the epicentric thematic core of the novel. June Blyth is an American national in whose association Oberoi transcends geography, nationality and culture and keeps his postcolonial identity as an open proposition. Till he is with June, he

feels at times as if he is structured of "raw materials to be shaped and reformed into structures which are created... to a better understanding, a better self-assessment, reflection, decolonisation..." (Jain & Singh 2004: 21).

Oberoi's own family orientation is pretty unfortunate. When he was four, his parents got killed in an air crash near Cairo and he is brought up by an uncle in Kenya. It won't be an exaggeration to say that whether Sindi Oberoi is in America or in Kenya and later on in India, he personifies in himself an itinerant deconstruction of imperial perspectives regarding the Orient. Oberoi's indulgence, in the global mixing of cultures and identities, becomes quite apartment as his mind goes on shuffling various modalities of hybridity. For instance, when Oberoi talks about the Americans during a dance party where he is supposed to be one of the ex-officio hosts, he comprehends the entire thing as a "fraud." In context of the dance ball and the party, Oberoi says:

> It was intended to bring foreigners in contact with Americans, but all it ever achieved was animosity; everybody ended up hating the Americans all the more. I don't know why it happened. It was not that the Americans showed off or misbehaved or anything. As a matter of fact they all were very courteous. Yet, something about it— a feeling that it was a bit of a charity or something— rubbed people the wrong way. It is one thing to be invited to somebody's house for a party, quite another to go to a public hall, buy a ticket... I never went to those things except as an ex-officio host. (21-22)

The preceding words amply illustrate Arun Joshi as "a fabulatory artist, scintillating synthesizer who rescues himself... in a fit of transvaluation, from the democratic irony that links the writer and his character to the tradition of humanity, or an encapsulating and stifling brand of humanism." (Razdan 2005: 14).

Whatever is left of humanism in Sindi Obero's self as a postcolonial character, it infuses into the reader's mind an appetite



for life as a humanistic undertaking. Oberoi feasts repeatedly on past feelings and continues to dream of the future. Kenya is his past, America his present and India his future. As already stated the novel climaxes with Oberoi's eventual return to postcolonial India. Even in the United States where he seems to be bound to the present, his soul feels stifled and the world seems no longer big enough for him. Inauthenticity and forlornness haunt Sindi like tormenting ghosts. After all why? The answer is not far to seek. It is the unstable, uncertain and insecure ethnic identity of Sindi which creates the 'tremors' of meaninglessness, absurdity and rootlessness in his inner psyche. Even in the midst of the crowd, Oberoi feels lonely and gets pretty irritated when everybody asks him this silly questions: "Where are you from? (22). In fact, throughout the novel, Oberoi always feels himself as a lonely man, haunted by the firm belief that he could not belong to anybody.

Interestingly enough, it is June who correctly assesses the existential postcoloniality of Oberoi and gives meaning to the very title of the novel *The Foreigner*. Oberoi's cultural identity in the postcolonial self cannot be thrust upon him because the centre of his consciousness "wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality..." in order to "assure validation from the centre." (Tak 2004: 448). The same postulation gets confirmed when June suddenly asks Oberoi:

> "Do you believe in God?" (29) And on Oberoi's enquiry:
>
> "Why do you ask that?" (29) June replies:
>
> There is something strange about you, they don't feel like they're with a human being. Maybe it's an Indian characteristic, but I have a feeling you'd be a foreigner anywhere. (29)

June's observations about Oberoi, here, constitute a typical scenario, "the self-conscious scene of postcolonial texts, theory, conferences and conversations" (Gandhi 2005: 2)

Oberoi is not a subaltern and his interactive socio-cultural terrain looks somewhat ambivalent. Neither is Sindi Oberoi a worst

victim of colonial oppression, though he was born in an African country, it does seem that Arun Joshi gives preference to "the existential resonance of the postcolonial... which attach to the notion of postcolonialism." (Gandhi 2005: 3)

In their early meetings, before they become intimate lovers, June's personal attitude vis-à-vis Oberoi smacks of an imperialist individual addressing her Asian male friend as if he is an incorrigible subaltern. The same kind of structured linguistic paradox can be witnessed when June comes nearer to Oberoi and he in spite of considering her "stranger and beautiful", reflects about his existential irony in these words:

Even if I loved her and she loved me it would mean nothing, nothing that one could depend upon. I was not the kind of man one could love; I had learnt that long ago. For June took it almost a year to find out. (34)

Actually, as a perfect instance of self-reflexive problematics, Sindi Oberoi is scared of being possessed, of being assimilated into a reality-pattern not of his own choosing. When one day, after a session of love making, June probes him to seek an explanation for his hesitation in marrying her, Sindi tells her that he "was only aware of a dull fear" (91). He also tells her that he "was afraid of possessing anybody" and "was afraid of being possessed, and marriage meant both." (91). Sindi's incorrigible diffidence and an obsessive resolve not to belong or get possessed deconstructs and neutralizes June's optimism:

I can't marry you because I am incapable of doing so. I would be like going deliberately mad. It is inevitable that our delusions will break us up sooner or later. (107)

Again, the dichotomy between the American and the Indian way of life, including the thought processes, gets admirably reflected in these words of the hero:

I am happy you look at the world that way, June, America has given that to you. The Statue of Liberty promises you this optimism. But in my world there are no statues of liberty. In my



world many things are inevitable and what's more, most of them are red and painful. I can't come to your world. I have no escape, June. I just have no escape. (107-108)

A kind of creative bonding dooms both, Sindi and June, as fictional personages "to a common mortality, waste and flux, becoming for the writer, especially the novelist, a kind of 'exorcism' and 'escape', 'scalpel' and 'wand'." (Razdan 2005: 14)

As already stated, the climatic sequence in the novel comes paradoxically in the very opening of the narrative simply because Oberoi remains throughout what Heidegger Calls "Lichtung" (Heidegger 1997: 77). In the context of postcolonialism and the New Humanities, it has been often argued that "... subjugated knowledge and literatures must resolutely replace the desire to become 'major' or canonical, with an opposite dream: 'a becoming minor'". (Deleuse & Guttari 1986: 27)

Sindi Oberoi, the hero, personifies in himself all these postcolonial tendencies within the hemisphere of New Humanism. A good textual instance of these inferences comes to the reader when things become really complicated in the relationship between Sindi and June. Sindi moves to New York from Boston, after rejecting June's honest and passionate entreaties to marry her and have a sense of belonging. While Sindi is in New York, June distance herself from him and comes very close to Babu Rao Khemka. Babu and June decide to marry, but when the former learns that June had been Sindi's mistress, he humiliates her and in a moment of uncontrollable rage and desperation, further aggravated by his constant failures in the exams, drives his car in mad frenzy, rolls down a bridge and dies. Oberoi's distorted and lopsided humanistic orientation unleashes the end of Babu. In this way, as postcolonial personages within the Western ambience, Sindi and Babu represent two divergent extremes of self-pity and over-confidence. Both get afflicted by existential pain and fracture of the self. Babu, no doubt, dies in a tragic way but Oberoi remains the dangling man, neither falling into the abyss nor retrieving himself to safety, only hovering constantly on the edge of the precipice. Even the fear of loneliness,

Oberoi is not able to negotiate properly because of his utter failure to see the truth about himself.

As a postcolonial globalized individual, Sindi Oberoi is a person whose mind functions as a storehouse of confusions coupled with indecision, sometimes veering to an antithetical and paradoxical psychic turbulence Oberoi's portraiture is to infuse into the character of the hero "a receding away from the social into the narcissistic pleasures of fantasy and the imagination" (Gandhi 2005: 57) The same observation gets confirmed by Oberoi's own words, when he comes to know that June and Babu are in love. Sindi is not able to come out of the delusion that he, himself, is still in love with June, as he says "I continued to delude myself with the feeling that it was all a temporary phase and that sooner or later she would come back to me" (109). And again he says, "howsoever I tried I couldn't stop thinking of June" (109). The turbulence in Oberoi's mind is so strong that he is not able to concentrate in his work nor can he read in the library,: "on the very first page I would get lost in thoughts of June and Babu and myself, and hours went by without my making any headway" (110). Oberoi's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde kind of personalty compels him to ponder over the fact that before he met June he had been a different kind of person and after meeting her, the "difference seemed so strong that I laughed" (110). Says Oberoi "I had become possessive, selfish and greedy all that I had struggled against for years" (110). Yet, even the realisation of this cardinal truth proved of little help, as the hero says: "Often I suspected I was going mad" (110). He thought of June with a "passion as depressing as it was consuming" (110). Yet all this time "the thought of offering her marriage as a price of retaining her never struck me that would have been to hypocritical, even in my desperate condition." (110)

Sindi Oberoi become the very personification of Being and Nothingness in Sartre's existential terms:

> I had permitted myself to become a battlefield where the child and the adult warred unceasingly. The child usually came on top. (110)



Oberoi being a prisoner of indecision vis-à-vis June, gets more than confirmed at the end of the second part of the novel, when he gives a phone call to her and learns that she is getting married to Babu, pretty soon. June refuses to meet Sindi, even once, and this makes him cry, "silently and hopelessly..." (111)

In the third and the last part, the narrative swings back to the fictional present when we witness Sindi Oberoi in postcolonial India, visiting Babu's home in Calcutta. What becomes interesting in this concluding part is the manner in which the author detoxifies the hero's personality with a heady-mix of postmodernity and postcoloniality. Babu's family comes into the picture only when Babu is dead and Sindi eventually decides to return from America to settle down in India. Mr. Khemka and Oberoi, during an animated conversation, conduct a verbal post-mortem of the dead Babu Rao and what emerges according to Mr. Khemka's opinion is that "Babu was fool". (117) The personalities of Mr. Khemka and Sindi Oberoi clash head on. On one side we have the problematization of ethnic diversity and a dedoxified self and on the other side we have a typical postcolonial Indian individual totally engrossed in his own world of business calculations and combinations. In Mr. Khemka and Oberoi we have binary models with different desires and identities and this kind of confrontation generates the belief that "such oppositional models themselves may derive from and reproduce colonial structures of thought." (Connor 1996: 233). Ironically, even toward the end of the novel one gets the feeling that Oberoi has rendered himself a marginalized or silenced person. Implicitly, it connotes that Oberoi within his own self internalizes the condition of marginality. As a postcolonial character, Oberoi, in consonance with the concepts of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, deconstructs within his consciousness "the very structures of dominant and marginal." (Connor 1996: 233).

Arun Joshi's innovative dissection of ethnic diversity and self alienation can easily be discerned in the very opening parts of the narrative in part three of the text. When the income tax department raids the office of Mr. Khemka, Oberoi feels disturbed as he belongs to an alien-oriented socio-cultural structure Mr. Khemka tells Oberoi

"You are young Sindi, and you are new to this country. You don't really know what's what. These things go on" (116). He further adds "the trouble with you foreign-returned chaps is that you think no end of yourselves." (116) Oberoi's reaction sounds not only individualistic but poorly convincing as well. "Perhaps he didn't know that I certainly thought rather poorly of myself." (116) These words again testify to the hard fact that in Sindi Oberoi's portraiture, both at the personal and the cultural levels, we witness the author's infallible expertise in deconstructing character besides his infused allied transformations in postcolonial-cum-postmodernist context. All these fabulatory , metafictional elements of the narrative in *The Foreigner* constantly make the reader highly conscious about the "drama" of the human self in incessant flux.

In the face-off between the senior Mr. Khamka and Sindi Oberoi, the author is trying to legitimise the splintering of dissident micro-territories of culture, constellations of voices and plurality of meanings. Oberoi's climactic personality at the end of the novel, especially when he comes to India, is seemingly poised to organize the business of the senior Mr. Khamka. Oberoi does gravitate toward Sheila, Babu's sister. Like June did earlier, Shiela also tells Oberoi "You are still a foreigner. You don't belong here." (122) Mr. Khemka is rattling on pompously, at which Sindi Oberoi says:

> But you at least knew what made an ass of a man; we don't even know that. You had a clear cut system of morality, a caste system that laid down all you had to do. You had a God; you had roots in the soil you lived upon. Look at me. I have no roots. I have no system of morality. (118)

Sindi further says: "Your morality was nice for India. It didn't work in America" (119)

The above quoted conversation, between senior Mr. Khemka and Sindi Oberoi, symbolizes the peculiar disposition of manners in Indian as well as American life. Whether it is Sindi or Babu, due to the self-vs-self and self-vs-others axis, Babu is a purely social creature. It is the changed condition of society, no less than the altered



apprehension of the self, which accounts for Babu's maladjustment in America while studying in Boston. He repeatedly fails in his examinations and is finally thrown out of the university where he is studying. Ironically, Babu comes to know June Blyth through Sindi and it is his naiveté and boyish innocence which endears June and she decides to marry him, even when Sindi shows no inclination to own her as his wife.

Existential maladjustment as a corollary to cultural and social disparity, besides the confusion created by the ethos of a mass society, gets visibly highlighted when Babu speaks about his desperate attempts to adjust himself to the American scenario. He tells Sindi that he was still getting used to the American system as it "was quite different from what he had at home..." (77). Even Sindi, who is more practical and down-to-earth in professional and academic matters, feels alienated like a dark modernist, non-committal, indifferent and atomized during his Boston sojourn. When Babu asks him whether he would be going back to Kenya after the completion of his education, he tells him.

"I don't know. I may go to India. It is all the same" (78). Sindi says that he isn't made for America and on Babu's prodding for a proper reason vis-à-vis the disinclination to continue living in the U.S., he finally has this to say:

It is all the same so long as I live among human beings... America is a place for well fed automatons rushing about in automatic cars. I'd go mad if I had to do that. (78)

The temperamental disparity and attitudinal schism between Sindi and Babu repeatedly hit the reader in the face, especially Babu's innocence and Sindi's almost schizophrenic, detached behaviour toward Babu. In Babu's character, Arun Joshi presents to the reader a postcolonial individual feeling confused in a foreign country like America, ceaselessly fraught by the anxieties and fears of failure. Contrary to this, Sindi Oberoi's postcoloniality is painfully compelling, as he is unable to negotiate the contradictions arising from indisputable historical belatedness. Both Babu and Sindi, as postcolonial and postmodernist personages, are plagued

by "something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps impossible dimensions." (Jameson 1991: 39). It is because of this very psychological truth, applicable to certain postcolonial personages that men like Babu Rao Khemka and Sindi Oberoi become mere personifications of the "postcolonial dream of discontinuity... ultimately vulnerable to the infectious residue of its own unconsidered and unresolved past." (Gandhi 2005: 7) This proclivity toward discontinuity and the vulnerable personality unable to cope with the residual past, is amply illustrated by the roles of Sindi and Babu in *The Foreigner*.

Sindi Oberoi remains a foreigner till the very last day of his stay in America. He simply doesn't belong to any place. At the end of the novel, he takes over the business of Babu's father, Mr. Khamka, after the latter is hauled up by income tax authorities on charges of tax evasion and fraud. It seems that Sindi Oberoi ultimately becomes a deconstructed character, whom the author uses as a continuing experiment of the postcolonial metropolitan individual, lost in the cloud-chamber of his own confusion, changing relationships and positions. The recent much talked about transcendence from 'national consciousness' with the global mixing of cultures and identities, is what Sindi Oberoi, and to some extent, Babu exemplify, not only in their roles but also vis-à-vis their perceptions, conceptualizations and behavioural eccentricities. The romantic triangle of June, Babu and Oberoi, not only transcends geography, nationality and culture but also aggravates the throbbing, pulsating and fluctuating postcolonial identity in *The Foreigner.* When Babu is getting engaged, and June hosts a party on the occasion, the same is attended by the members of the International Students Association. In this crowd of guests, we have Indians, Pakistanis, Japanese, Koreans and Americans. Americans are shown as eager to know more about India and Japanese "wanted to know more about Americans..." (126) While reminiscing about the tragic end of Babu and June, it is his own failure to come to grips with life that haunts him:

> For twenty years I had moved whichever way life had led me. I had learnt much on the way. I had learnt to be detached from the world, but not from myself. That is when the fatal error was made, that ultimately led to Babu's death and then to June's death (165)

When the novel ends, the climax becomes an open-ended one, pregnant with all kinds of possibilities. The senior Mr. Khemka goes to pieces and Sheila, Babu's sister, is shown as gravitating toward Sindi as the latter asks her "Shiela, do you or do you not want me to run this place?" (191). It would also be logical to conclude with a one liner from the last page of the novel. Sheila asks Sindi for how long he planned to stay with her father's company, as the Senior Mr. Khemka has already been arrested and is going to face trial for tax evasion. Sindi tells Sheila, "I don't know... as long as I am needed, I suppose" (192)

The inconclusive, intriguingly suggestive and fictionally experimental end of the narrative in *The Foreigner* makes the novel as good as any work of absurdist literature, echoing with Hamlet's famous refrain, "To be or not to be, that is the question..." This kind of "random absurdity" even in the postcolonial literary context makes the hero, Sindi Oberoi, as representing within himself. "a repertoire of procedures and attitudes" (Hassan 1985: 15). Sindi Oberoi, and to some extent, Babu Rao, classify within the vortex of their respective identities, a peculiar typology of culture and imagination. Such representation permeates not only postmodernism but postcolonialism as well, in the form of "a sociological, culture, literacy and technological phenomenon" (Razdan 2002: 152).

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# Metaphysical Rebellion in Albert Camus: A Critique of Mysticism and Metaphysics

***Bilal Ahmad Dar***

The paper concerns itself two important ideologies. The first deals with the fundamental question as to why there is metaphysical rebellion in Albert Camus against the hope and heaven breeding religious institutions, spiritual as well as orthodox. The second elaborates the consequences that are born of the confrontation between the religious and rebellious sensibility in Camus. The summation of the paper would set an open ended parallelism between the two perspectives.

Imagine a man on earth looking upwards and knowing that he is under indefinite space, alone, all alone knowing nothing where to go, what to do yet eager and inquisitive for something he can't say and does not know. Such a sense of absolute loneliness of oneself is what constitutes the feeling of absurdity. Camus portrays this sensibility of man thus:

> In a Universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity.
>
> (Camus1975:13)

Camus interprets the 'Absurd' in various ways. It is the weariness that comes at the end of our mechanical life and our severe struggle that results in a total absence of hope and thus cultivates in

us a conscious dissatisfaction. However, the absurd condition yields meaning in so far as we don't not agree to it. Camus elaborates further that the absurd is an "... extreme tension which he [Absurd man] maintains constantly by solitary effort ... which is defiance" and that "there can be no absurd outside the human mind. Thus, like everything else, the absurd ends with death" (Camus 1975:19-20). Our life from birth to death is change that nobody desires and beyond that we are to invent beliefs and faiths or believe in the ideologies born of the realizations of 'great souls' regarding our life hereafter or fate. We are conditioned by birth to believe what others make us believe. This is the myth of belief by which the politicians and priests still rule countless souls around the world and the 'great absurdity' so rampant in our societies. We search peace and find pain everywhere. And then we are asked to believe for higher peace hereafter. If we believe we become the privileged and accepted lot of our theistic culture. If we don't we become another privileged atheistic class. However, if we defy and confirm simultaneously the ideological foundations of both the positions, that act or attitude sprouts the sword of metaphysical rebellion. So rebellion is an ideologically paradoxical and problematic position like all other ideologies, especially mystical and metaphysical. And the rebel's first question is that are these ideologies, theories and beliefs, cultural or otherwise, acceptable, convincing and above all comforting when humanity at large is burning in the fires of existence? To, what Nietzsche calls 'herds', they are. But to sensitive souls or 'free spirits' they can't be because of the inherent absurdity of human condition, meaningless suffering, sense of alienation and utter metaphysical silence of heaven. So if they are obsolete, they are to be rejected and rebelled, as Camus advocates in his concept of rebellion. This leads us to define that the absurd represents a relation between humans and the world that they inhabit. It is the ultimate disproportion between what humans' demand of the world and what the world provides in response. Humans demand rational clarity and understanding with respect to the world, while the world is a brute, silent fact that fails to respond to the human craving for rational explanations of it. As Camus claims, the world is fundamentally irrational. Instead, humans are forced to formulate responses to their



own metaphysical questions by acclimatizing themselves to rebellion, submission or pataphysical solutions.

We share our common experiences (generally historical, outward) with one another therefore we understand because we all commonly share the seed of time, of cause and effect in our experiences. The history is nothing more than this as viewed outwardly although the absolute source of history may be somewhere else. The 'universal Spirit' that reflects itself in the dialectical human history, to use Hegel's terms, gets challenged and rebelled by the history that man is to create at the cost of human blood and tears. Either history-ridden man has to assume and believe that finally human historical dilemma of pain or suffering is a necessary evil that manifests divine creativity and finally subsumes into universal good at the cost of what is at least 'human' or else value and embrace what his own history has to offer to him. Man has been doing the former since the Hebrew prophets started turning the ever recurring monotonous myth ridden minds of pagans and pantheists towards historical notion of life and the ensuing responsibilities and rewards. It is out of this shift, as Martin Buber analyses in *The Prophetic Age*, the axial or reflective age of mankind stated. He dates it 500 B.C. Whatever, man has remained with responsibilities as the reward has not dawned yet. What to do? Continue believing in the final good which may visit us tomorrow? The entire morality and ethics of our culture revolves around this theoretical, idealistic or nostalgic notion of good which fails to convince us in presence of concrete historical and heart rending facts, e.g. concentration camps, genocides and extreme forms of poverty or during Kashmir crucifixion. More than that the self-conscious decaying self of a sensitive individual fails to derive any concrete comfort from this idealistic culture of 'universal good'. In such concrete excruciating self experiencing situations either one may resign to the so called divine scheme of things or else one may question the very scheme. The former gives rise to common man's culture of belief and dogmas so rampant in our societies, while as the latter can set up a new culture founded on what is human demand to God, a common demand of humanized mind, "a situation where all the answers are human...formulated in terms of reason" (Camus 1953:20). In such

a culture the metaphysical rebel does not deny the divine diagrammatic principles of metaphysics that explain of existence rather he calls them to question to weigh their validity on the altar of bleeding historical man. The rebel slave confronts the master (God whom the rebel conceives in his mind and heart) and trials Him according to human standards and principles and criteria. Such a confrontation between master and slave constitutes the soul of the literature of revolt. A true modern rebel is one who confronts the divine other and exposes its divine impotence in the face of what Camus calls 'human absurd condition'. The confrontation does not yield a consolation or some mysterious revelation, rather it derives, if pursued consistently and sincerely, the human realization of our absurdity and the ensuing will to live or will to power or power to will, or will to suicide in presence of the other according to the potential and kind of the rebel (as there are three kinds of rebels to be discussed later). The confrontation inaugurates the humanly authentic possibility of freedom of choice between active rebellion and passive submission. The confrontation is creative act that is open ended like modern literature. It respects the very limits that 'form' of being human imposes on the expressions of the rebellious soul. Otherwise, rebellion may lose the human grandeur and it may thus fail to be loyal to earth. In this sense metaphysical rebellion is humanly, not divinely, sacred. It establishes the kingdom of man on earth where all values, cultural and religious, are human. In other words, in opposition to all ideologies Camus calls for a position that is free of messianism and disencumbered of nostalgia for an earthly paradise. Absurd that characterizes rebellion by claiming: "...revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it"(Camus 1975:54). However, one does not become resigned to the absurd, since resignation indicates an act of acceptance. In other words, a rebel recognizes the finitude of humans, thereby acknowledging the death sentence hovering over all humans, while simultaneously living in protest.

Although the rebel is doomed to failure from the start because of the inherent finitude of his very existence yet the very act of revolt generates the immense freedom of questioning and



expression. It was this freedom of individual expression that has been curtailed and suppressed for long by the institutionalized culture of religious faith in a mysteriously all omnipotent, omniscient and merciful master. Our rebel does not deny his master rather he defies his regime. He is a sincere blasphemer, a devout who announces that the only hope in presence of such a master is total rebellion and total hopelessness. He replaces the false idols and symbols that man is made to worship by priests and politicians. In this way he generates the possibility of a religion and politics where men, though divided still because of their inherent imperfections and evil, are free to face existence face to face. He brings man back to himself, to earth and its lot. He replaces beggary and soul's poverty by self affirmation. He is a modern Christ who faces the cross with a curse on his tongue, not an exclamation of union with the master. He does not cultivate false and unrealizable heavens in the minds caught in the strife of the senses and facing nuclear holocaust. There must be no doubt in our minds that the faith culture of religion still exploits people in the name of an allegorical heaven and hell. The other camp of heretics and disbelievers strengthen the roots of the believers' camp by its opposition. They two camps, both in the capitalist and the communist environment complement and sustain each other. The affirmation of anything inheres the negation of the other and vice versa. It is the Haves of the two camps that process and maintain a constant, stable and almost eternal ideological opposition with each other because it is the constant friction ignited out by the Haves of the two camps among the respective Have-nots that keeps the Haves in power and in control of their have-nots. Out of this confrontation rigid, orthodox and violent 'others' or the generally poor 'have-not' believers (which may include armies, cops, religious extremists and infuriated mob) have been created and spread everywhere in metaphysical master's earth so that they can, like landmines, bloom and burst whenever their respective Haves get new revelation or else feel insecure. This is how the faculties of belief and disbelief or sentiments are exploited in the so called divinely ordained antagonistically cultivated culture of binary opposition. William James says in this regard:

Our faculties of belief were not primarily given us to make

> orthodoxies and heresies withal; they were given us to live by. And to trust our religious demands means first of all to live in the light of them, and to act as if the invisible world which they suggest were real. It is a fact of human nature that men can live and die by the help of a sort of faith that goes without a single dogma of definition.
>
> (W James 1949:25)

The confrontation between the rebel and the master is problematic and paradoxical. It problematizes the very discourse that identifies the master as superior and subjects his transcendental nature to rigorous psychological and logically human demands that he fails to satisfy. The 'I- thou' Buberian relationship is neither maintained stable nor reversed (like mystical discourses do by asserting that I is Thou and vice versa) rather problematised in the very confrontation because in the dialogue the rebel himself splits into culprit-slave and master-judge. As modern man is a true symbol of split personality and schizophrenia, he is a simultaneous paradox of being himself and the 'Other', a Kashmiri who has to be Indian and Pakistani simultaneously, never himself; the other who can't be tolerated because no other can be understood except as alien and hostile to oneself. However, the final resolution of the relationship is reached only with the death of the slave rebel which in turn brings the death of the silent master. The modern rebel can't trust and contend with the master like the traditional saints and prophets because his demands can never get fulfilled in the way he wants. He wants salvation of one and all and everything which does not fit in the master's scheme of things, as the Kashmir resolution fits neither in the constitutional scheme of India nor in Pakistan's nor in earthly god's-USA-scheme. So the rebel either must rebel against the 'Other' or surrender to the silent master's senseless scheme. Rather than have a master who created evil, it is better to have no master, better to be the masters of one's own destiny or what Nietzsche says to be God oneself or Dostoevsky's 'man-god' or Nietzsche's Superman. The new realization is not a promise to an allegorical heaven rather it is the realization of 'total responsibility' of 'good faith', taking up the burden of existence on one's shoulders like Sisyphus without



bearing any abstract metaphysical illusions of the faith culture, as Kashmiri's have started or must start by launching a peaceful physical rebellion(under the banner of Kashmir's human freedom, not religious, from India and Pakistan) against their tyrant masters without relying any further on the promises of impotent UNO or any such other organizations. It is the affirmation of immanence of 'one and all' against the transcendence of the chosen ones that they have been preaching in Kashmir and elsewhere since ages in order to drive herds, under the banner of religious utopia, to meet their interests. More than anything else such a realization is the consolation for one and all that no one escapes the principle of immanence, of history. But affirming living mere historical truths does not mean despair as we are made to believe. Camus presents a separate explication of the essence of living in absolute immanent historical condition in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "Being aware of one's life, one's revolt, one's freedom, and to the maximum, is living"(Camus 1975:63). Thus, Sisyphus must be imagined happy because he is cognizant of the fact that he controls his own fate. Although the gods have condemned him to a life of ceaseless toil, it is Sisyphus [like Kasmiris] alone who must discover and create meaning in his life. The gods have no control over this aspect of him. However, because mastery of one's fate must be seen as tantamount to happiness, Sisyphus controls what is of supreme importance –the determination of meaning in his life. Camus confesses that the possibility of a transcendent meaning of life remains unknowable. Thus, it is humans who must actively create meaning in their lives, living in terms of the absurd. Camus observes in this connection:

> The mutual recognition of a common destiny and the communication of men between themselves are always valid. Rebellion ...opened the way to a morality which, far from obeying abstract principles, discovers them only in the heat of battle and in the incessant movement of contradiction...Nothing justifies the assertion that these principles have existed eternally...But they do exist, in the very period in which we exist.
>
> (Camus 1956:14)

The genuine result of the trial of master digs out the authenticity of one's own self of being the crown of creation. The trial generates rebel literature narrating the stories that can direct the reader to look deeper into the heart of reality, into the depth image of man. Such an image has been presented by the modern and post-modern seers and saints such as Absurdists and nihilists. The excavation of this image demands participation and experience on the part of rebel and not mere idealistic belief on the scriptural symbolism that explains away the brutal and bruising experiences in literary and metaphysical paradoxes. We can't lay the foundation of the modern world on the ruined foundations of medievalism. The death of metaphysics has brought man face to face with reality. Man is to experience now what he used to only believe. He is to create essence out of existence. He has outgrown man and wills to be Superman (Nietzsche) or else plunged into the depths of nothingness (Beckett). He is complete, beyond or lost in the 'binary opposites'. He precedes and follows both existence and essence. Only he recurs eternally, blessed and damned to life and death eternally. He alone is who has neither beginning nor an end. He has become God himself.

So if there is no deliverance from the wheel of life and death for the majority, then there must be 'eternal recurrence' or rebirth: physical, psychological or something else like birth in the dark underground as some postmodern writers imagine. In this regard, a great number of the Hindu, the Buddhist and the Jain mystics and prophets confirm their many physical rebirths. Buddha had eight hundred rebirths before his attaining *Nirvana*. Not only this, one could console oneself with death if one were sure that one would not get recycled back to the world of life. Birth and death are recurrent complementary opposites unless there is some third way out. Died once does not mean total extinction as before-birth stage displays our absence and after-birth displays our presence. Then death is again absence. Where does presence and absence come from/ what is its purpose? Who can say where it will stop finally? Rebirth, in this sense, is an ongoing process. To go to the Semitic hell is to be born in hell i.e., in history i.e. in the word, in the strife and pain of senses and human mind. So if one is justified in designating this world and human destiny as hell, as almost all the religious scriptures



do, then hell is as absolute as religion's heaven, twins. So the discourse of history is not merely an epistemological, ontological or idealistic problem for us rather it is existential and experiential that makes humans of flesh and bone to participate in the seemingly never ending double caged prison of time and space and birth and death problem. And history has no final reconciliation of the elements that sustain and produce history: the history of murder can end only with the end of history itself. Living history man inevitably is a victim to murder for various reasons especially for political revolution, social and economical reformation. In this sense historical changes and revolutions romanticize the hope of 'utopia' but generally ends with the condition of disillusionment, e.g. the French Revolution or Kashmir Issue. Disillusionment, historical or otherwise, produces rebels who embrace the disillusionment with all human resentment only to refute the limitations that it imposes. To live is to be in limit situations but refuting limits (as it expresses human will) is creative and yet paradoxical for every new refutation is a preparation for newer possibilities and limits. And these possibilities or free acts are what can save man from the despair arising out of our realization that the universe does not care. Art as an act of freedom is to supplant religion and to create life-affirming moral and life enhancing aesthetic values. Camus proceeds in his investigation to distinguish between three forms of rebellion: metaphysical, historical, and artistic. The artistic rebellion is the only authentic form of rebellion in which one can live. The basis of the reasoning that leads to this conclusion lies in the fact that both metaphysical and historical rebellion ultimately lead to the sanctioning of murder. Thus, both metaphysical and historical rebellions inevitably sanction murder. However, as murder is not a logical consequence of the Absurd, the life of the artistic rebel must reveal how one is to most authentically live as a rebel, in terms of the Absurd.

Regarding metaphysical rebellion, he claims that absolute affirmation and absolute negation are both forms of destruction. While absolute negation in metaphysical rebellion is characterized by a renunciation of all that exists, absolute affirmation blindly accepts everything that exists. Consequently, the former concludes

that murder is a matter of indifference, since nothing is meaningful, while the latter says 'yes' to everything, including murder. In either case, murder is sanctioned. However, there is a sense in which authentic rebellion says 'yes and no simultaneously'. In other words, the rebel does not engage in absolute affirmation or absolute negation, both of which result in the legitimating of murder. Of these two positions, Camus asserts that in both ways the rebellion ends in murder and thus loses the right to be called rebellion. Thus, metaphysical rebellion inevitably ends in revolution. However, Camus maintains a sharp distinction between revolution and rebellion. When rebellion leads to revolution, it can no longer be properly regarded as rebellion.

The artist recreates, but does not attempt to replace, the existing world. As analogous to his examination of absolute affirmation and absolute negation in metaphysical rebellion, Camus concludes that realism and formalism in art do not characterize artistic rebellion, for the former exalts reality while the latter completely rejects reality, just as absolute affirmation accepts reality and absolute negation rejects it. Thus, Camus' partiality to the Aristotelian notion of a mean between extremes becomes evident in the course of his investigation.

Thus, the true artistic rebel neither completely consents to reality nor entirely rejects it. Camus posits artistic rebellion as the most pure form of rebellion because it creates, rather than destroys. According to Camus, rebellion that ends in destruction can no longer be referred to as rebellion because the Absurd refutes the legitimacy of suicide and murder, and because the purest form of rebellion in which one can live is artistic rebellion, the logic of the Absurd is ultimately a logic of creation rather than a logic of destruction. Camus' assertion that to live is to act asserts the primacy of living in terms of the Absurd by living in rebellion. As rebellion is a protest against the universal human death sentence, the life of the rebel is a life of impassioned activity. The most authentic rebel lives in artistic rebellion, engaging in acts of ephemeral creation. Thus, for Camus, absurd art is art that values and exhibits process rather than the product that reveals an obvious concern with the construction of a



finished product that will endure permanently. The authentic artistic rebel creates, fully aware that the creation is merely ephemeral and only meaningful for the duration of its construction. In this way man becomes a purely historical creature: the prime source and fountain of all that we have in this world – virtues and vices alike – without any hope of supernatural consolation.

The attitude of those who seek or attain God is totally distinct from the non-seekers or non-attainers. The former accepts everything as everything is of/by/from God. He reflects pain and pleasure without any revolt or surrender. By following this path he attains the Truth and realizes himself but if he revolts he loses the path thereby all the Truth. He is a slave to the Master; he can not be 'sentimental' while pursuing truth. The truth is there, as metaphysicians preach, not because man wants or creates it but because it is already there and man's duty is to discover it. It is apriori in nature, preceding our being and intelligence and thus gets established as irrefutable and eternal. Essence here precedes existence. Wisdom, intelligence and conformation help the seeker of the truth to understand the hierarchies of the truth including that of unjust suffering and justice. Concentration, meditation and the prayer lead him to higher hierarchy (stations) and ultimately self-realization. So the faith culture produces slaves who follow what Nietzsche called 'slave morality'. Such a soul can therefore never be a 'murderer' either rational or irrational. He can't celebrate tragedy which is our history. He can be an ascetic, indifferent and silent to human tragedy. He can not be a part of history because history is the creation of rebels and murderers. He can be a 'don't do this' or 'do that' on history. He has his transcendental source of history inexpressible in human discourse and the mystry on which his faith rests. Albert Camus observes in *The Rebel* that "Faith leads to immortal life, but faith presumes the acceptance of the mystery and of evil and resignation to injustice. That is why rebellion wants all or nothing" (Camus 1956:44). A metaphysical or historical rebel too watches the binaries but instead of transcending, although he does/must imagine the all inclusive non-dual Whole that holds the opposites in complementary tussling relationship, he absolutizes both the attributes because both of them manifest the all inclusive Whole.

He is more inclusive in recognizing the attributes of the all inclusive whole. He can enjoy the heaven and the hell simultaneously. However, both the saint and the rebel have their own sense of responsibilities. A rebel rejects the apparent injustice eternally while a saint accepts it eternally. A saint's attitude finds an eternal justice in every act of apparent injustice because to him the apparent-immanent-humanistic-rationalistic-naturalistic-positivistic interpretation of injustice in this world is a mere illusion of the human ego/mind. Otherwise how can a soul that too of a saint can accommodate the pain of the burning Child of history. The former's choice is choicelessness while the latter's inevitable choicelessness is his choice. The former is 'secretly free' while the latter enjoys a freedom with regard to common rules.

No doubt murder too reflects God and humans are to commit and lament murder simultaneously whenever and wherever needed and thus have to create the really real meta-ethics - 'moral nihilism' which is beyond the notion of good and evil. Such ethics characterizes and represents our true condition. It is not a support for nihilism rather a preparation to transcend historical and moral nihilism: by accepting 'becoming' without recourse to an outside authority or entity because justifying our act of acceptance is to be a spontaneous and natural action without resentment or future reward. It is the now of life and action, not the tomorrow, which can cure the sickness of longing for an allegorical lost home. Finally it is a matter of individual's choice to choose one term out of the world of the 'binary opposites'. However, in choosing one he has to sacrifice/lose the other. Either way one can have only the half. One logically can not have eternal bliss and eternal evil simultaneously. One can't be George Bush and Gandhi simultaneously. However, the Whole is all inclusive. Nothing lies outside it because it is 'Absolute Nothingness', void. Therefore the whole includes and must include both the hell and the heaven; justice, injustice and non-justice; bliss, despair and 'blissdespair'; preservation, creation, destruction and 'recreationredestruction' ad infinitum. But this whole is not there, it is here in this world. Such a state is not anybody's privilege in the scheme of things. In short a rebel is more sentimental and compassionate and thus he rejects the offer of salvation because



"the injustice and suffering of the world will remain (so long as time and an outside omnipotently malevolent God remains merely as a spectator of human suffering) and no matter how limited they are, they will not cease to be an outrage. D. Karamazov's cry of 'why' will continue to resound through history: art and rebellion will only die with the death of the last man on earth." (Camus 1975:32)

The revealed knowledge of mystical or metaphysical intuition never assumes an objective shape for the deliverance of the commons. It remains a private secret to the possessor. Although the possessors do pass it on to the others of the 'line' sometimes 'chest to chest' and generally through the sacred and holy traditions, symbols and letters. But all these signs remain superficial, as the history of all the traditions show, in so far as the realization of the transcendent Godhead or 'core' is concerned. The Core remains hidden and the symbol is followed. This religious crest over the Core has been shattered by the metaphysical rebel by revealing the *differance* of philosophical, epistemological, political, theological and religious systems including that of personal and idiosyncratic tendencies which in turn, in one way, has paved the way for the development and exploration of 'the Core' (if any) in the universal sense without any consequent development of the "institutions" over the Core because metaphysical rebellion must keep hammering the grand institutionalization 'of the core' which it does by implication of its very nature of paradoxical *differance*. This is the role that mysticism in its traditional expression has failed to perform. That is why mysticism became the personal property of pseudo-mystics who sell it now everywhere, especially to the empty western market. In the postmodern age there is every possibility and reason that the 'Core' can never be institutionalized or personalized. According to Buddha Truth is inexpressible but the postmodern epistemological and ontological rebellion shows it practically. Herein lies the beauty and ugliness of the 'core', to speak in the postmodern vein. Beauty, because the core is not subject to the historical and system oriented humanistic dialectical reason as it is existential and experiential, entity-in-itself in so for as its realization is concerned. It is non-being that is why it always is (if any) not the way the space-time

bound knowledge or being can perceive and propagate. Being can realize non-being by becoming it. In other words to know God truly is to become God or Christ born in our own soul as Meister Eckhart terms so. In this way it is inexpressible, though not inexperiential at least to a few whose trust, subjectivity and devotional love for it surpasses all theories of knowledge and understanding. And the greatest achievement of human consciousness, according to Eliot, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Buber, Jaspers, E.Underhill, Simon Weil, E.Voeglin and Lonergan and recently K Wilber etc. is the pure realization of the 'core' which lies within every soul. It involves all risks as does history but it at least will liberate man from the cut throat schizophrenic 'progress' that the advent of so called materialistic life has engendered in almost all the outer spheres of life.

The "core's" ugliness is that it grants permission that everything is 'permitted', because everything reflects the core whether it be gnosis or superficial signs and traditions through man and history. The core demands passive 'virtues' to suppress active/ creative 'crimes' of human self. It is 'isness' while it sets the human ego in 'becoming'. It eats man's 'Pride'. It asks to surrender to attain the eternal peace while at the same time it boils the spirit of suspicion, indignation and 'Universal suicide'. So the final gesture of man with regard to truth and life is to rely on the inconclusiveness of all points view. It must have open ends so that human life, culture and literature can grow out new vistas of aesthetics and understanding.

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# Four Poems

***Brian Mendonça***

## Haldighati

The sound of hooves
Hastens the end,
Horse meets elephant
In mortal combat.
For the pride of Mewar
A soldier must fall,
As flames leap
To devour her chaste.

(Haldighati, Udaipur 7 Nov 2009)

Note: Rana Pratap met Akbar's Mughal army in the battle of Haldighat in 1576. The narrow defile of about a kilometre is known as 'haldi-ghat' because its soft yellow soil looks like haldi (turmeric).

## Lake City

On a sheepish *Mewar*
I arrived in Venice
In a grim city
Reeling from drought.
The lights of the Lake Palace
Don't wipe the worry
of the *safa*-headed mahout—
His caprisoned camel
Not having much to do.
Haldighat, Nathdwara
Eklinji, Saheli-ki-bag
Travellers pause
for a slice of the medieval.
Tales in a time warp
Robed in the Aravallis
The sun God is regent here
In the crisp autumn morn.

(Udaipur 5-8 Nov 2009)

Note: On 21 October 2009 the *2779 Goa Express* rammed into the stationary *2964 Mewar Express* (here 'Mewar') in a train accident near Mathura; *safa*: turban



## Jaipur

The *nattli* hears
Her baby cry
Misses her step
Losing the wager of a king.
Sunday morning stories
In Chitrakoot park
In the distance on the hill
A temple looks Eastward.
Surya Pol, Chand Pol
House-dwellers live
In rhythm with the cosmos.
The Birla hall welcomes all-
its ornate facade
recalling Amber.
Jaipur *razais*
(1 kilo kapus)
Sit 'neath my seats
On the Ajmer Shatabdi.

(Jaipur 8 Nov 2009)

Notes: *nattli*: a woman ropewalker - from short story by Rajasthani writer Vijay Dan Dheta narrated by Hema Yadav in Jaipur; *razais*: cotton-filled lightweight blankets made in Jaipur and famous across India. Suitable for early winter; Amber: Amber fort near Jaipur built in the 16th century by Raja Man Singh; *2015 Ajmer Shatabdi*: superfast AC chair-car express train leaves Jaipur at 1750 hrs reaching New Delhi at 2230 the same day.

## Empty Rooms

Empty rooms
Put-away chairs
A lock on the bedroom door,
Darkness in the kitchen
A hush over the house,
A daughter-in-law serves parathas
The pain in her eyes, palpable.
The stairs creak
With a heavy tread,
In the front room
Sandlewood garlands
a beaming visage.
Out on the porch
The shadows lengthen
The jasmine refuses to flower
Waiting for a loving hand.
Neighbours glance nervously
At visitors to the house,
While a pack of urchins
Romp down the street,
Their carefree banter
Ringing between the courtyards.
Why does a heaviness
Descend on life.
Lalita, was it fair
For you to leave like this
After making the morning tea
And reading the day's newspapers?

(Jaipur 8 Nov 2009)



# Cremation

***Mohiuddin Reshi***

"O, a sixer!"

"Another one!"

"It's unbelievable!"

"How many sixes did Ravi hit!"

"See, our village will win today also!"

"Ravi's back in his form."

"Whenever he's in form, nobody can beat our village."

"Rashid, listen to me! Even if Imran Khan balls to Ravi today, by God, he'd be beaten!"

"O, yes, Shiban, you'r right. Ravi is one of the best players in our village. Once he stays at the wickets, he hits them on all sides. The wickets seem to have grown roots."

"Listen, Rashid. If Kashmiri players got coaching, they'd also become international players."

"God knows why they don't send our players out for coaching?"

"Shiban! That is what we also say—!"

"Time for drinks is over; players have gone to their positions."

"I believe that the captain of lower village will now get fast bowlers!"

"Shibanji, what do you say?"

"I feel the same."

"But, you should have seen what Ravi did to fast bowlers from the city last Sunday. They fled like smoked out rats."

"Before the match started, they'd said, 'we'll teach these rustics what it means to play cricket!'"

"But, what a bad condition they got in when Ravi scored a century!"

"Their bowlers got nervous."

"We couldn't notice how they left after losing the match."

"Look! Ravi is at 97. God! He must score a century today also!"

"They say that even great players at 90s get out because of nervousness."

"If Ravi scored a century today also, he'd be declared the Man of the Series."

"O, a full toss ball! O, a sixer; a century!"

"O, our village has won!"

The entire village rushed out and took Ravi on shoulders, making rounds of the field. Ravi was declared the man of the field and being the captain he was given a trophy. Before giving the trophy, the Chief Guest addressed and said:

"I was very impressed with Ravi's playing and I can't believe that Ravi hails from this backward village. I will recommend to the government that Ravi should be brought to the city and sent outside for coaching."

The whole village cheered and became happy. The village was wearing a festive mood since morning. The vendors had arranged their mobile shops outside the grounds. All elderly and young were happy. But, Maet Khar was sad because he had not seen Ravi for many days.

"My son! Where have these people gone?"



"O, Maet Khar. You don't know our village has won the final match. Ravi scored a century. The entire village is jubilant."

"My son! You've made me very happy. Take this rupee. Is it true that Rave's got a prize?"

Ravi was beside himself with joy that today his papa would appreciate him for winning the trophy, his mother would hug him and his elder brother, Nanaji, would welcome him! While thinking about all this and on reaching home, Ravi's dreams were dashed to the ground when he heard his father saying:

"Hasn't this cursed come yet? He's led the entire village astray. Oh, I feel guilty for these village kids. This is the time for them to read and write. Your son has left me good for nothing."

"No, I had told you beforehand to keep an eye on your son."

" See, after the school, he sits at Maet Khar's shop."

"What would he get there? Soot on his face, what else? He has earned bad name for Hindus. He spends the day with urchins."

"Look at Ramajoo's son. He got a medical seat. Who'd say he's a herbalist's son!"

"Oh! I'd prayed to God day and night that Ravi should become a doctor so that he sat sit with me at the shop but no—"

Ravi retraced his steps and sat at Maet Khar's shop thinking that the entire village is happy with his play but how his own family is angry with him.

"But, my father would be happy when the government sends me outside for coaching—Yes, my God must do it quickly!" While thinking about this, Maet Khar came from somewhere and was happy on seeing Ravi and kissed his hands.

"They say you have conquered some fortress and also won some prize."

"Oh, yes, father! We've won the match. The entire village except my home is happy."

"Why?"

"They'd want me to become a doctor but I want to become Gavaskar."

"What does that mean?"

"O, father! A good cricketer. What else?"

"O, I got it!"

"I don't want to be a doctor. The profession is not considered good now. Today's doctor is a lover of money. He's become a butcher. I don't want to earn money through wrong means. You see, father, when the government sends me outside for coaching, I'd not only get good name to my village but also the country."

On hearing this from Ravi, Maet Khar ignited the hookah bowl and started taking long puffs as if unmindful of his self."

The night-prayer call was given and Ravi was thinking where to go. In the meanwhile, Nanaji came out looking for Ravi and he found him at Maet Khar's shop.

"O, you tramp! Father is all fire. Come quickly. Mother has kept food in the closet. Go silently!"

Ravi entered quietly and slept without taking food.

Ravi was waiting for a call from the government but no message came. Pressure from home and his own desire—! Ravi was turning mad and would spend time at Maet Khar's shop who would smoke from morn till evening. Ravi started liking the opium smell and would intermittently ask for puffs from Maet Khar.

Maet Khar hesitated in the beginning but could do nothing for Ravi would look at him with strange eyes.

Ravi had become Maet Khar's disciple. Whenever, Maet Khar had none to fan the fire, Ravi came forward for fanning it. Hearing this Ravi's family bridled him and imprisoned him. For days, they would not open the door. One day Ravi jumped over the window and ran to Maet Khar's.

"O, father! Give me one puff. I'm dying!"

Maet Khar hugged him and gave him opium.



Coming from the city, Rashid and Shibanji passed by and were surprised to find Ravi in this condition. They couldn't understand anything because their hero's clothes were dirty, his face had beard and his hair were untidy like a lunatic. They couldn't bear this and come near. In the meantime, their friend, Abbas, came and told the whole story to Rashid and Shibanji. Rashid said to Shiban, "His father was a chemist. Why didn't he give Ravi some medicine which would keep him away from opium?"

"What does medicine do to this disease! Don't you see that by taking drugs the English left their religion and the world and became hippy, saying 'harey rama; harey krishna'. This is the situation of the English. What cure would Ravi's father have for him?"

"Ah, God will punish this Maet Khar. He spoiled Ravi!"

"See! What a boy he was! What a player!"

"O, Abbas! The city is in turmoil. I also heard they kill people. That is why I left the city."

"Shibanji! No. This can't be the case. Why should they kill? It must be for something else."

"No, I was scared and took Rashid with me and came back to my village. Let other things go to dogs; it is important to save oneself."

Saying this they forgot Ravi and started moving. They had taken only some steps when a gun-short was heard and at the same time somebody cried, "Father's been killed, Father's been killed'. Ravi was beating his face and wailing.

Abbas, Shiban and Rashid ran back and saw Maet Khar lying flat in his own shop. Shiban ran to his home and told his father that the gun had reached thier village. Maet Khar had been killed. They say he'd been killed for smoking opium. What should they do now? So many people had fled from the city for Jammu.

Next day, Rashid and Abbas came to Shiban's home to inform him that Ravi's father had gone somewhere without Ravi.

But, they were surprised to find that even Shibanji's house was locked.

"Rashid, who knows where they have gone! What call they got! What will happen to Ravi now? He's orphaned."

Saying this, Ravi appeared before them and begged:

"Are you not my friends? Please give me five rupees. I have nothing. My father and mother left me here without money."

"Oh, are you not my fast friends? Give me five rupees."

Abbas took pity and said to Rashid:

"Do you have nothing? I have only three rupees."

"O, yes. I, too, have two rupees. That's now five rupees. Give to Ravi."

Ravi was happy and left. It was reported that Ravi would beg and collect money and then smoke opium. He wouldn't worry about food. Some times he would get curry from neighbours and at times take food without curry. Nobody now gave him money because all knew that he would collect money for smoking opium.

It was winter and it started snowing heavily. Quickly three to four feet thick layer got collected and all the roads got closed. People would spend most of their time in mosques because bath-keeper heated the mosque well and the villages took stock of the situation there. In the meantime, some body said, "Does anyone know Ravi's whereabouts? What would he have done in this bad weather?"

Rashid and Abbas ran and reached Ravi's home. They called him but there was no reply. Both of them entered the house through a window from above the door and were surprised to find Ravi lying down half dead in the corridor on a broken mat. The feet and legs were uncovered whereas the upper body was covered with a torn *pheran*. All the rooms were locked. Seeing this, both these friends were pained and Rashid said:



"How bad are they! They haven't left any room open for Ravi!"

"Come, let's keep him in the study room."

"Break the lock."

"I'll go to the attic and get a *kangri*."

Thus, the two friends took Ravi to the room and laid the bedding that was there in the room. Abbas attended on him for one week and Rashid got food from his home. Ravi's condition started improving but he was not mentally fit yet.

Abbas's family got angry with him. If something happened to Ravi, the blame would go to him. After this, he left his friend alone.

It was Friday. There was a great rush of people in the local grand mosque. After the prayer, people were surprised to see Ravi sitting with a bowl among beggars. Villagers went to him and they found him terribly weak and untidy. The entire village was aghast—.

Ravi's last rites commenced. He was given a wash in the mosque bathroom. While taking him to the crematory, the problem of fulfilling his last rites arose. Abbas's father, Naba Mir, shouted out, "Is there no Hindu any where?"

Aka barbar said, "There is a Hindu in the police post at the lower village."

"Search for him and beg of him and get him here."

The Hindu came and Ravi was laid on the pyre, and Aka barbar's son ignited the pyre.

For two days the entire village took no food. Everywhere there seemed darkness.

After some time, the SHO from the lower village arrived to investigate who had shot Ravi as his heirs had applied for relief.

(December 1994)

# Blunder

"They say Waheed has been killed by putting a noose round his neck."

"No, he's been hanged by tying him to a tree!"

"What're you saying? His fingers and the tongue have been chopped off."

"But, what mistake did he make?"

"Mistake!"

"He had committed a blunder!"

"What blunder?"

"He'd brought out a newspaper and was writing the truth!"

(December 1997)



# Illusion

How lucky are those who are childless! There is neither noise, nor any cry; they neither interfere in anybody's matters nor talk of others. And, this is our condition—we have been abandoned by our own children!

I remember visiting peers, saints, dervishes and shrines for want of a child. I had this illusion that they would support me in my old age. But, today I am treated as a stranger in my own home.

Bashir Sahib took a deep sigh because once again Zubair had scolded him in front of his daughter-in-law. . .

His wife had answered back and asked why even their straight talk appeared to him as wrong: "*aemis gash lalas lajis balai*! He doesn't leave home without my permission. You had always a negative approach. You never value your children. You sent one out in the name of security. He doesn't even want to come home. And, you got Zamrooda married out in her teens; she became a mother of three kids in childhood—oh, she would have still been in college! Were condition bad only for us that you got them engaged on..."

Bashir Sahib's wife Mehmooda narrated the story in a single breath.

"All my life, I have been longing that you would appreciate what I said. You go on talking endlessly."

"Oh yes. I speak endlessly and you scatter pearls. Haleema Madam is right when she says, 'After superannuating, men turn bitter and the home becomes hell'." Saying this, Mehmooda who was a madam [teacher] in a government school went into the kitchen and was stunned to see that today also the daughter-in-law had

scattered all utensils without washing because she goes late for office if she does the washing.

Mehmooda had been informed by her headmaster that the school was going to be inspected and that she should be in time next day. She left the home without eating anything and told her husband that the kitchen door was open and he should close it.

Bashir Sahib understood that as usual he had to manage the kitchen and he stood up. But, today he couldn't move and remembered everything about how dear it had become not to heed his parents....!

His father had chosen a girl for him but Bashir Sahib had fallen in love with Mehmooda. They would always wait for and meet each other at Batmaloo bus terminal while going to their jobs. One day they married against the wishes of their parents. Life went on for them—Mehmooda would look after her house and Bashir Sahib did the washing in the kitchen.

Keeping the bitter experience of his life in view, Bashir Sahib did not want his eldest son, Zubair, whom they called Gasha Lala out of love, to marry a girl of his choice but he could do nothing. And, Bilquees who was working in a telephone office came to their house as daughter-in-law.

Initially, the daughter-in-law's home coming made Bashir Sahib feel proud, and she not feeling tired of calling him Abaji. All her relatives respected him and this continued till the daughter-in-law got pregnant. No sooner did this happen than Bashir Sahib felt the burden of his home—going and coming to his office and home, and getting doctors' appointment for his daughter-in-law and getting medicines made him very tired. This continued till the last day in his office before his retirement.

The office gave a farewell party to Bashir Sahib and mentioned all his admirable work till he became the superintendent. To make this occasion memorable, they gave Bashir Sahib a shawl as well. Office people accompanied him to home and were surprised to find his home locked. They had thought that Bashir Sahib's home



would be as happy as the home of another of their colleague, Bishan Das, who had retired recently. He had invited all his colleagues to his home. Here they saw quite the reverse and they left shaking hands with Bashir Sahib.

Bashir Sahib could not understand anything and in the meantime a boy from his neighbourhood informed him that his family had gone to Women's Hospital. Bashir Sahib turned back and reached the Women's Hospital. There his wife came forward and congratulated him on becoming a grandfather. The daughter-in-law's mother complaining of not getting sweets said, "O, you have brought a shawl. She got it off his shoulders and put on the legs of the new-born baby." In a moment, the white shawl got shit and urine stains. On seeing this Bashir Sahib became motionless.

Forgetting bitter and sweet moments of his life, Bashir Sahib entered the kitchen and got engaged in washing up the dishes. Meanwhile he thought about his position in the house—was he a master, father or servant?

"Yes, I am now only a servant in this house."

In the meantime, Mehmooda came back from school and was surprised to find Bashir Sahib absorbed in some thought as he couldn't notice her entering the kitchen. "Hello, you continue to be in the kitchen? What has happened to you?"

"I lost everything—job, home, peace and rest!"

"Stop now! Let neighbours not hear it. I have now only some months to superannuate, then, we will spend life together. Come out. I will manage myself. You go the bus stop. Ashu must be coming from school!"

Bashir Sahib left to fetch his grandson.

Mehmooda began to think about Bashir Sahib's being sad. She put the vegetable bag down and started working in the kitchen. The telephone rang. She ran and in this process her foot thumb got entangled in her pyjamas and she somersaulted. She cried and fell down motionless. The telephone continued to ring.

The daughter-in-law was getting furious thinking where the elders had gone and why nobody was taking the phone. She had to inform them that she was not coming home but would go her father's with her husband.

Bashir Sahib returned with a school bag on his shoulder and carrying Ashu by hand. On entering the house, he called his wife. Ashu started shouting, "Amiji, Amiji", but there was no answer. Mehmooda had fallen flat dead on the floor.

* * *

Bashir Sahib was somewhat lost after his life partner's departure. The daughter-in-law would look down her nose at him and his son, Zubair, had become a henpecked and did not bother about his father. Under one pretext or the other, he would abuse his father in presence of his wife. Sometime his daughter came to see him but her heart ached on seeing her father's condition.

Bashir Sahib was now suffering from asthma and coughed continuously throughout the night. The daughter-in-law had warned Ashu not to go near his grandpa for fear of getting infected. Bashir Sahib felt dizzy during the day and would not be able to go the market. He started becoming a burden for his family. Nobody would even offer him a glass of water.

One day Bilquees asked her husband whether they had to live like that. "We'd suffer! Your father feels dizzy during the day and keeps us awake throughout the night. Think of getting rid of him. His younger son does not even think of Kashmir. He enjoys in foreign countries and we have here coughing with us."

She whispered, "If you agree with me, I will tell you something. Don't feel offended. In this is our deliverance!"

"Abaji, yesterday, Ashiq Sahib was calling from outside and he said, 'Send Abaji here, I will get him treated here'. We'll take you there so that you get well."



Bashir Sahib fell into the trap and said, "Yes, after the death of Mehmooda, I don't feel comfortable here. I will go to my younger son."

Today, Bilquees and Zubair take every care of Bashir Sahib—polish his shoes and make him wear new clothes. Bashir Sahib could not understand anything. Ashu signalled that he should not go. In the meanwhile, a Sumo came and all the three started their journey to Jammu. Ashu was kept at mother's parental house. From Jammu to Delhi by train and then traveling for four days, they reached some station at one o'clock in the night. Abaji was asked to sit on a bench and informed, "You wait here. We'll return after calling Ashiq Sahib".

They secretly boarded the return train.

Waiting for four days on the bench made Bashir Sahib dead tired and he swooned. On the fifth day, he found himself at a place where there were only old people around him. He tried to say something but he had lost his tongue.

(June 2005)

# S. R. O.

"Look at this 'dear' Father! He was never dear to me. In childhood, he'd thrash my soles and now he doesn't talk with a straight face. And, he doesn't fulfill our needs. I wish..."

"Nazir, cursed be you! What're you saying?"

"O, Bashir, this Lassa Malik, your father—He's an obstacle in our progress. We must do something about him!"

"What's wrong with you? Do you think so badly about your father? I won't tolerate it!"

"You will, when time comes!"

Cursing Nazir, Shabir started brooding over his brother's talking. But, he remembered that he had asked his father to sell 2 kanals of land so that he could get two lakh rupees to pay as bribe for a job as he had a great desire to work in a city.

Everyday at 9 o'clock, at the bus stand, Nazir would gaze at city-going government employees. And, today, he saw Raja alighting the bus like all other employees. He was shocked and asked a shopkeeper why Raja had boarded the bus with other employees. The shopkeeper told Nazir that Raja was recently employed under an S.R.O.

"What is an S.R.O.?"

"Her father had died in cross-firing and the government gave a job to his daughter."

"Does that mean that the Government gives jobs to all those whose parents died of bullets?"

"Yes, so far, that's the case."



Nazir began to think while gazing at Raja till the bus left for the city.

Nazir and Raja had been school mates and he liked her, but she would not talk to boys. However, today she was openly talking to her colleagues. Seeing this, Nazir's desire for a job grew further and throughout the night he thought of the S.R.O.!

( June 2007)

# My Life

Rauf was trying to feed his child in an open field but it was crying endlessly. Rauf would weep and beat his forehead.

Looking upward, he addressed God saying, "You've put me in trying times!"

He had given up now because he was finding it difficult to rear the child without Farida. They both had had many dreams, but Farida died immediately after giving birth to her child.

Holding the child on to his bosom day and night, he'd appeal him to be quiet.

"What would I say to Farida when on Doomsday she asks me that I could not take care of her mark?"

Time passed and Rauf would rejoice over Naveed's growing up. He couldn't believe that Naveed was going to school. When Naveed obtained a distinction in matriculation, Rauf went straight to Farida's grave.

"Come out! Your child has passed Matric."

Naveed passed twelfth class efficiently and his father sent him away to do engineering in Bangalore. He'd phone him every day, enquiring about his whereabouts. However, after some time the father lost contact with his son. And, one day he got a message from Naveed's college informing him that Naveed's admission had been cancelled because he was absconding.

Rauf was stunned and shocked. He looked for his son everywhere but got no clues about him. He turned almost mad and would day and night stand in front of Farida's photo and talk to it.



One day, unexpectedly many people assembled in Rauf's compound and started talking in small groups. Some would say that he was a great *mujahid* while newspapers had reported him as a dreaded terrorist. Meanwhile, Rauf opened the door and reading the newspaper gave a cry—

"Don't call him a terrorist or *mujahid*, he's my life; he's my life!"

(8 January 2009)

***Translated from Kashmiri by Mohammad Aslam***

# Telephone Number 71979

**(A Tribute to Amin Kamil)**

***Akhtar Mohi-ud-din***

Hello, exchange —— hello —— 71979 please —— Thanks —— — so kind of you ————

Hello, hello, hello – Heard you are going to die. You really are something! —— What ————? Cancer ———? Let me give you some advice then. Be sure you don't even touch *bum, Cress, hund,* [1] dried fish etc now. That is why I called. You know they haven't yet found a cure for this disease. What if some element in these eatables destroys your disease? Then you will repent —— Why are you asking me? God knows after consuming devastating medicines prescribed by so many chemists and doctors have you been able to get the disease! There you are, testing me! Don't stop eating adulterated food, the market is flooded with it.

Are you there ————? One day I asked a godly man (Godly men know everything, you know): "The heat of the *kangri*[2] scorches me even when a couple of yards away, why should there be these huge fire cauldrons filled with burning wood?" Running his fingers through his beard he replied: "God is merciful and compassionate. Do you doubt that. But Adam's children turned out to be rogues. They refused to believe it and said, 'Had He been really kind and forgiving He would not have thrown out our father from Paradise on the excuse of a grain of wheat.' On hearing this, it is said, God sent them a message attempting to appease them but they rebuffed Him. God being God, you know, He flew into a rage and shouting an obscenity announced, "So you won't listen ——— Here now I'll pack you off to Hell!"



Hello ————

No, why should I have asked whether he would himself stir the row or employ his counterpart of *Tara Massih*[3] to do his bidding. I don't doubt His kindness and mercy. I'd be the last person to get embroiled in a controversy. If five men stand for elections, I will tell each one of them that I voted for him ———— You were the one always inviting trouble and see where you have landed yourself ——— How would I know? If only someone returned from there! Now look at our wily hawker. He tricks so many clever foreigners. What's one God for us, can't we deceive Him! If we can't, then we're damned —Yes—What can I say about that? —— Yes, brother, that's true ———— No place can be worse than this one ——— there it will be over in one go ————not like here ——endless suffering from birth till death ———And everything to happen there is sorted out well in advance ———— These are the wages for such and such a sin ————Not like here where all measures and weights are counterfeit. That's why I envy you today. By God, you have had the last laugh!

Hello, hello————

So, all arrangements under way for your own exit, leaving us behind to languish here! What was that you would say about wisdom? In the end it all comes to naught! Didn't I say, let us cut wood? Our skin would have hardened, our bones become stronger. On seeing us everyone would be atremble.Wherever we spotted a spruce, we would fell it. Wood would be aplenty. We would be used to the Kangri. We would not cringe at God's Hell-fire .If the worst came to the worst we would have a few scorches on our backs. Can't even fathom if He has kept these logs for them. I have seen flowers spring from their graves. A marble tombstone, with a railing on all sides and in the midst early flowers in full bloom———— Tell me, would flowers sprout from smouldering earth ! A cunning stratagem I'd call that! By God we will be the only ones who will become a laughing stock after our death. It's all your fault and you got me into this as well.Talk of wisdom!

What? Children! Come on , don't bother yourself about them. The fate of our brood will be the same as the fate of millions! Even a *Machander*[4]will eke out a living — never heard that? God knows who he was. Forget it ,a Machander or a Sikander or a Mahindra , the high and the low all lie buried under the debris of time.

Only yesterday I saw a dog soiling a tombstone. The sight made me mutter, "You wretched dog! What have you done? This grave may have held an eminent poet or a saint or maybe—— one never knows. The tombstone carried the following inscription, "The sad demise….." Then the date—15 August 1947, corresponding to some hijri. I thought to myself "This poor man should have had no tombstone. Tombstones are soiled by dogs." I don't know why but for some reason I pitied him.

Hello, hello———

Yes, if a damsel ran off with a bull or with a chicken it would be an extraordinary event.I agree it would be rather strange. Come to think of it, not really. It all depends on how you look at things. But even then one grants that it would be a strange event, as strange as, say, the news that a man bit a dog. But even that doesn't mean much. If such a strange occurrence is recorded in history books, even that will be forgotten in time. History and dramatic performances couldn't bring back to life even a Raja Harish Chandra. Life goes on ——— am I wrong?

Yes, that is alarming. By God I can't maintain accounts of my monthly income let alone an inventory of my whole life. Can't understand this accountability thing. He should have provided us with a ledger so that we could make daily entries in it. Here we cheat the income tax people, the electricity people , .the water department, all those who can easily outsmart us. We are able to throw dust in their eyes,the ones who pride themselves on their cleverness. What's the big deal in fooling angels, those simple creatures? Had they not been hidden from us, we would have fooled them long ago. Poor Satan, he was the only one caught amongst



our wily politicians. They say even he's astounded. By God howsoever bad he might be ———he is of angelic stock after all.

What———? Hello——— Yes I remember some important things. No, Can't talk about them————least of all on the phone. Everyone will get to know and we will be stoned—— We will be made out to be the only sinners, through we know every dwelling houses at least a couple of them. It's an open secret but the one who says it out loud will be in trouble! No, not me, my dear. I just don't have the stamina. I keep hoping that on the Day of Reckoning ,when He asks me about my deeds , no friend or neighbour or relative should be within hearing. Even going to hell will be difficult for me.

Come now, you are telling me! You know so well. That if someone does you a good turn here, he'll make you repay him. For a spoonful of medicine which he might have fed you he will ask you to carry him on your back while crossing the bridge on the Day of Judgment. I know you are not the one to take any favours from any one.

No, no——now if these are counted among sins that would be very cruel. We aren't angels, are we? Can a young man be held culpable for his sweet dreams while in deep sleep? If one is prohibited from gazing at the dawning light in spring then one would rather prefer to be blind. Like flaming flowers, these moments illuminate the desolate landscape of being. If I am held accountable for these, then I will be as disappointed and angry with God as I used to be when my stepmother turned her face away while speaking to me as a child.

Hello, hello, hello———

Why are you cutting it short? It's no child play ———— Dying, that's what it is, Dying! I will no longer be able to hear your voice ————Who is it ————the exchange fellow? Hey, one more second.

Listen, one dies when there is still a contemporary out there living. When he too dies, then everything else passes into oblivion.

Hello, hello——hey, one second ———just one ———hello, hello ———damn nobody's listening.

[1]Indigenous vegetables with medicinal value usually consumed after sun drying.
[2]A fire pot.
[3]Zulfikar A Bhutoo's executioner. Here any executioner.
[4]A small moustached animal like a rat or a beaver, used to describe a good-for-nothing fellow.

***Translated from the Kashmiri by Nusrat Jan***



# Beyond the Canon

**Title: *Language and Media: A resource book for students***
**Authors: Alan Duran and Marina Lambrou**
**Publisher: London & New York: Routledge**
**Year of Publication: 2009 [First Indian Edition, 2010]**
**Pages: 270 (paper back)**

Language as-and-for communication has been debated over the years primarily by highlighting its 'interactional' and 'transactional' functions within a speech community. The discussion has generally centred around the default structure of face-to-face communication. This concept was first advocated by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, in his *Course in General Linguistics*. Language as a two-way system of communication where interaction takes place between one-one or one-many taking the vocal-auditory mode in which the speaker is hearer also and the hearer become the speaker as well. This is what has been termed as a "canonical speech situation" which continues to be described in different forms, especially the 'turn-taking' format involving two participants facing each other. Although later linguists, especially Roman Jakobson, extended the earlier model and included 'functional' aspect of communication involving how and what of language use. But, neither Saussure's nor Jakobson's model has been found adequate in account for all communication events/situations as both of them describe what has been called the 'transmission' or 'conduit' type of communication involving face-to-face interaction only. There is a lot of communication that takes place beyond the 'canonical' speech events involving a much wider audience, what has been termed as 'mass communication'.

*Language and Media* by Alan Duran and Marina Lambrou deals with this wider or mass communication issue which takes

'communication' away from the 'canonical speech situation' into what is known as 'mass' or 'mediated' communication': "'Mediated' communication involves specialized adaptations of the resources of face-to-face verbal interaction" (p. 16). The authors draw on Denis McQuail (1969) for spelling out the chief characteristics of this interaction. McQuail identifies seven major features of this communication which the book summarises as follows (p. 16):

1 They normally require complex formal organisations.
2 They are directed towards large audience.
3 They are public—content is open to all.
4 Audiences contain many different kinds of people.
5 Mass media can establish contact simultaneously with very large numbers of people at a distance from the source, and widely separated from one another.
6 Relationships between communicator and audience are managed by people who are known only in their public role, as communicators.
7 The audience for mass communications involves people coming together because of some common interest, even though the individuals involved do not know each other; have only a restricted amount of interaction, do not orient their actions to each other; and are either not at all or only loosely organised as a group.

This type of communication is not dialogic or dyadic but involves varying structures from a wide variety of communication events. For instance, today a phone-call does not need the other person to respond immediately ; it can reach the voicemail box for a later response. SMSs can be live, *synchronous* (p.17), or *asynchronous* (ibid.), that is, "added to, as a thread" (ibid.).

Mass communication is not therefore the same as simple face-to-face interaction in the traditional sense. It does interactivity also but needs different capabilities to create it. Duran and Lambrou spell out two distinctive features. One, they call 'reification of spoken communication' which involves "turning something that is a process or set of relationships into something fixed, a product or thing" (p. 18). For instance, speech can be turned into writing or writing into printed text: "Both formulas convert the evanescent character of



speaking into something permanent and reproducible: a fixed text or artifact" (ibid.).

Another distinctive feature of media discourse that the book talks about is 'Interactivity" which is not the same as we find in the 'canonical situation' as discussed above. Rather, it refers "to a process of *using* media. The user interacts by choosing: targeting and selecting material, for example, using Google searches, message alerts, RS feeds, or following hypertext links. . .Other kinds of interactivity again involve interaction between users, creating two-way forms of communication (as with email, instant messaging, mobile telephony, or online electronic games and interaction in virtual worlds). In all cases of interactivity, however, what is involved is some communication of the following:

- the degree to which two or more parties to a communication event act on each other,
- how far their interaction affect the unfolding direction of the communication, and
- how far such mutual influence is synchronised." (pp. 18-19).

This is the background which forms the basis of *Language and Media*. However, this theoretical background forms only a very small part of the book for obvious reasons. The book has been written for students and not a theoretical debate, per se. That is why, after placing the book in proper perspective, the authors provide a glimpse of various genres that exemplify variety and difference in mass media structures—"thriller, horror movie, musical, autobiographical, tragedy, etc" (p. 21). This leads to a discussion of media achieves discourse by employing different devices—words, metaphors, images and framing, for instance—giving it an altogether a different look than ordinary traditional face-to-face interaction: "One of the most frequent comments made about media is how rapidly they change. Even in a single lifetime—and allowing for variation by region or country—most people can expect to see massive change in the communication technologies available to them or around them" (p. 48). This has set the ground for making students aware of how language is or has to be used in. Hence the sub-title 'A resource book for students'.

*Language and Media* is part of a series called 'Routledge English Language Instructions' which "cover core areas of language study and are one-stop resources for students". The purpose of this series to offer easily accessible books to students providing an "overview of the subject, with activities, study questions, sample analyses, commentaries and key readings—all in the same volume. The innovative and flexible 'two dimensional' structure is built around four sections—introduction, development, exploration and extension—which offer self-contained stages for study". Following the general pattern, *Language and Media* is divided into four sections, each section containing nine units: "The nine horizontal threads begin with ideas of what media language is (in A1, B1, C1 and D1). Thread 2 explores different varies of language...thread 3 considers what is specific to media texts...thread 4 investigates media genres. Units A5, B5, C5 and D5 all examine, from different perspectives, how information is presented in media discourse" (p. vi). Unit 7 concentrates on how words are linked with images—still and moving—and units 8 and 9 discuss boundaries of media language and the future of media language, respectively.

*Language and Media* also follows the same pattern. Section A is titled 'Introduction: key concepts in language and media'. It discusses how mass communication or 'mediated communication' differs from the generally known face-to-face interaction and what are the boundaries within which media language words and how is discourse achieved by applying various devices—words, images, etc.

Section B discusses theoretical issues like 'Schema and genre theory' before talking about different media structures as in 'story telling' or sociolinguistic personal narratives, based on the model developed by Labov and Weletzky (p. 101).

Section C analyses media language. Through different tables (especially, C1.1 and 1.2, Duran and Lambrou how and what kind of communication takes place in media. The call this 'how' and 'what' as "communication audit" which large business organisation undertake to know "the flow of information and opinion that takes place, both in terms of the channels that a are selected and the content that is communicated" (p. 127). This unit discusses the medium of blogs and 'discourse communities' "in which groups of individuals



share goals and purposes and use communication to achieve those goals" (p. 130). Later on, it discusses various kind of studio talks like 'political news interview', 'chat show interview' and 'rhetoric and figurative language in advert". Once again, through different activities, students are encouraged to comprehend the issues and put them in proper perspective.

Section D entitled 'Extension: Language and Media Readings' is a rich published resource, books available in and about media. The extracts from various books provide a glimpse into the "different meanings of the term 'media' and the different, sometimes confusing ways that this term is used in our efforts to understand the forms, channels, and modes of organisation of human communication and interaction" (p. 189). In unit 1 (D1) there are excerpts from Ruth Finnegan's *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human Interaction* (Routledge), Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana) and Katie Wales' 'Keywords revisited: media' that concentrate on the meaning of 'media'. In D2 different works pertaining to 'varieties of media language' have been quoted and in D3 'media and modernity' is dealt with. There are readings from David Crystal, Norman Fairclough, David Graddol, Allen Bell and Theo van Leeuwen, big names in linguistics and language studies. All the nine units in this section give a lot of background knowledge about various issues that have been dealt with in earlier sections of the book.

'Key dates in the history of media' gives "a basic chronology of inventions and related developments in media history" (p. 238). The time period starts from 45, 000-5000 BCE and ends with 2009 when "Inventions and developments continue across digital media, including especially internet delivery systems and increased wi-fi communication" (p. 247). In 'Further Reading' books related to various media related issues have been given. These issues are the same as discussed in the earlier chapters of the book.

In addition to four sections (A-D), *Language and Media* contains 16 'Figures' spread on different pages but listed on page xiii, 21 'Tables' listed on page xiv and seven 'Transcriptions' taken from different mediums—TV, newspapers etc—listed on page xv. At the end of the book, we find "Key dates in the history of media"

(pp. 238-48), 'Further Reading' (pp. 249-51), succeeded by 'References' (pp.252-59), followed by 'Index' (pp. 261-69) which is succeeded by a reference to the website http:www.routledge.com/textbook/reli where further activities can be found.

*Language and Media* is a learner-centred self-study book which involves students in real communication activities leading to a better understanding of the issues discussed in each unit of the book. For instance, while discussing the different 'capabilities' involved in media language, students are asked to "Describe as precisely as you can the different 'communicative event' capabilities involved at each stage of the following: a friend thanks you, during a phone conversation, for an audio recording you forwarded to them as an email attachment of a phone-in radio programme you had enjoyed listening to on the internet" (p. 19). This shows that the authors want learners not simply to acquire knowledge of the field but also engage in real time tasks for a better comprehension of the issue/s discussed in the book.

*Language and Media* would be a valuable resource book, in particular, to students doing a course in journalism and functional English. For both, there is sufficient food for thought and a lot of work to do to comprehend how English is used in media today, booming with modern technologies. However, any of these courses is not an essential qualification for studying this book. It doesn't assume any prior knowledge of the subject. 'How to use this book' provides necessary guidelines to the reader and says, "You can read this book like a traditional textbook, 'vertically' straight through from beginning to end. However, [it can be read] in another dimension, 'horizontally' across the numbered units" (p. v). This makes the book all the more relevant as can be accessed by anybody interested in understanding how language is used to do things in different situations and contexts. Its language is lucid and within the reach of anybody.

*

***Faheem Aslam***



# Orientalism in India

**Book: *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770-1880***
**Author: Michael S. Dodson**
**Publisher: [South Asian Edition] New Delhi: Cambridge University Press**
**Year of publication: 2010**
**Pages: [paper back]268**

Edward Said's *Orientalism* ushered in a new era in literary studies in that it redefined the Orient, the Oriental and Orientalism which had been so far been seen through Western eye and in relation to Western empire. In West, it provided a mirror image of inferior and alien, which now are termed as the "Other". He questioned not only this narrow view of West but also many other inaccuracies of a wide variety of assumptions that West held about the Orient. For instance, Said pointed out that Orientalism as West looks at it can be seen in the depiction of 'Arab' cultures. There 'Arab' is "irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and—perhaps most importantly—prototypical" because it suited the Occidentalist's manner of looking at "Other". "These notions are trusted as foundations for both ideologies and policies developed by the Occident" (Internet). Said's pioneering work provided a base for looking at East afresh and, thus a new wave of Postcolonial studies emerged whose main focus has been to study indigenous cultures—larger or smaller—in a non-Occidental manner: "The Orient' cannot be studied in a non-Orientalist manner; rather, the scholar is obliged to study more focused and smaller culturally consistent regions" (Internet).

*Orientalism, Empire and National Culture* (hereafter, *OENC*) by a US scholar, Michael S. Dodson, studies the Indian

culture by going back to the past through Sanskrit, a language which many believe died like Latin as the language of the elite. However, Dodson reveals that Sanskrit "survived as a living language and continued to be highly significant culturally well into the nineteenth century. It remained, rather like Latin during the Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe, a language of scholarly written communication and teaching across the whole of India, and even beyond, in Nepal, Burma, and other parts of Southeast Asia" (Bayly, 'Forward', p. vii). Dodson therefore found enormous material in Sanskrit and Hindi texts for investigating the rich intellectual culture that got the popular name as 'Indian civilisation' and what Dodson calls 'orientalism in India': "This is a book about orientalism in India. It examines the varied manifestations of literary, historical, and linguistic scholarly practices which were utilized to constitute the object 'Indian civilisation' through the literature of Sansrit, from 1770 to 1880.

Dodson's food for thought on how important Sanskrit has been in India and how different colonial pedagogy was in collusion with the Sanskrit tradition came from his visit to Benares College (now Sanskrit University) in 2000: "The role of colonial pedagogy and Western knowledge, its quantitative difference from the status of so much of the Sanskritic tradition, hinted at in the opposition of 'truth' and 'lie', is here fractured. ...What interested me then, and has formed the impetus behind this book, is the realization, encapsulated in these aphorism [on the Benares College walls], of the potential of a complexity which lay behind an institution such as Benares College" (p. xii). *OENC* therefore investigates the scholarship that emerged from the most important Sanskrit centre and which defined a distinctive culture only to be subverted later on by Western colonialism: "Thus, this book discusses three principal themes [Orientalism, history and culture], grounded chronologically: from the late eighteenth century, in which the East Indian Company used orientalist knowledge, and the relationships forged with *pundits*, to underpin its burgeoning state in Bengal; to the uses made of orientalism's methodologies in 'constructive orientalist' educational initiatives in the nineteenth century 'civilising mission'; and finally,



to the adaptation, by Indian Sanskrit scholars, or some of orientalism's principal discursive, institutional, and social constructs in the production of newly inflected Hindu identities" (p.1).

The author draws on Edward Said's critique of West and provides a lively discussion on how Said changed "the way in which historians must write about European researches into 'the Orient' and the rise of colonial governance...'the West' has produced and managed—through a long history of literary production, academic scholarship, ethnography; and stereotyping—an image of the non-Western world as degenerate, exotic, despotic; essentially religious effeminate, and weak" (pp. 1-2). The author accepts Said's basic thesis but move beyond it by drawing our attention to how Orientalism was applied as "a series of strategies to coopt, control and adapt elements of established Indian social, cultural, and political authority" (p. 5). In this connection, Dodson points to the role the *pandits* played in (a) helping the East Indian Company enter the socio-political of India and (b) enabling the British scholars speak with authority on 'oriental' civilization based on the knowledge gained from *pandits*: "...an important part of the nineteenth-century liberal project of bringing improvement to India through rationalist education was the pursuit of a series of 'constructive orientalist' strategies and practices which were devoted to utilizing selected elements of respected Sanskrit texts, as well as high social and cultural standing of the *pandits*, to authorize specific versions of historical progress, civilisational hierarchy, and British superiority" (p. 5).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* had recognised 'the centrality of knowledge to empire' and it showed the way to "displace imperial histories based on high political narrative, social structures, and economic change" (p. 6). Asian histories concentrate on knowledge and knowledge-processes with an increasing interest in the history of science and medicine. Seemingly, the two appear different from each other, but in actuality have converged. *OENC* therefore provides a critique of both these approaches in the light of the author's view of "O/orientalism' in India.

*ONEC* comprises six chapters, an 'Introduction' and 'Forward' by C.A. Bayly besides the normal academic paraphenalia—'Preface', 'Acknowledgements', 'A Note on Transliteration' in the beginning of the book and 'Afterword', 'Abbreviation', 'Notes', 'Bibilography' and 'Index' after the main body of the book ends at Chapter 6. In Chapter 1, the writer discusses Orientalism in relation to the writing of world history. He maintains, "Orientalist research was an integral component of the East Indian Company's conquest and governance of India. [Therefore, he] seeks to unambiguously reassert the important connections between a history of eighteenth-century orientalist research, in particular, with the rise of British imperial power in India" (p 18). The author traces the genesis of this history in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when the East India Company's interest in India developed with trading in Asia. The various travelogues published in Britain and prepared by Company servants presented India as an exotic, though most of these accounts were superficial. However, British orientalist research in India began as far back as 1760s with Company's piecemeal conquest of Bengal and its management of the land revenue. Thereafter, the British administrators slowly began to implement various laws pertaining to law, justice etc and gained control over the territory. In this regard, Dodson mentions, in particular, Warren Hasting's policies in the early 1770s which "had several important consequences with the realm of British scholarship on Indian history and society" (p. 21). Dodson then moves on to discuss how Indian history began to be written with a British perspective, of course, taking help from Sanskrit language and texts written in this language. In this regard, Dodson mentions several historians and, in particular, Sir William Jones' whose stay in Indian led him to assert that Sanskirt, Greek and Latin had descended from the same language. Dodson quotes this from William Jones:

> The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.

Jones' assertion had far-reaching impact on Indian historical studies and its aim was "to support a specific historiographical agenda; namely, the conversion of the study of language into a discipline from which historical 'truth' might be elicited" (p.26). This also led to a study of Sanskrit texts for providing explanation to various Brahmanic rites and ritual practices specifically attributed to the Vedas. The result of this study was "to contruct a vision of 'Hindu religious practice' with reference to an ideal, brahmanical vision set out in the ancient Sanskrit *sastra* (philosophical-religious texts), and which served to further marginalize 'popular', or syncretic religious practices in European understandings of Indian religion" (p. 39).

Chapter 2 of *OENC* entitled 'Sanskrit Erudition and Forms of Legitimacy' show how the early orientalist research in India has not dealt with social an political contexts in which "that body of scholarship was produced" (p41). It then goes on to discuss the role of *pandits* paved way for Company's strengthening its roots in India: "On the eve of the Company's governance of Bengal, *pandits* played important social, political and cultural roles in India, as they had for generations, and to a large extent still do today" (p. 43). They eventually became the Company's local interlocutors which, of course, was "often fraught with a measure of ambivalence and suspicion" (ibid.). In the late nineteenth century the Company took up the task of codification of Indian languages "into representative grammars and dictionaries, as well as the partial institutionalisation of Sanskrit-based education" with an aim "to break the *pandit's* ' monopoly' on Sanskrit-based knowledge, thereby making it potentially available to all in an uncorrupted form" (p.52). In this regard the Sanskrit College of Benares became a readily available centre for coordinating, collecting and copying "of Sanskrit manuscripts, so that they could be made widely available to European orientalists" (p. 57). By the turn of the nineteenth century the

Company was trying to bring the entire Sanskrit scholarship under its control, leading ultimately to pandits' becoming intermediaries between the colonial government and northern Indian communities.

Chapter 3 of the book enumerates on how the Company officials recognised and understood that winning over the Sanskrit intermediaries was crucial for their success in India. In this regard, the British liberalism which posed itself different form orientalism actually turned to have many commonalities with its predecessor. Chapters 4 and 5 therefore concentrate on how slowly the Company brought in the 'Anglo-Sanskrit' programmes to Benares College under James Ballantyne and one of the orientalists suggested that in order to grapple with Brahmancial education, Britishers needed to acquire "skill in the language, and" penetrate "into the arcane of their philosophy" (p. 86). Chapter 6 discusses the impact of European knowledge on themselves and applied it to changing their own "educational, cultural or nationalist projects" (p. 143).

Dodson seems to be sympathetic with *pandits*, especially at the Benares College whose erudite scholarship and translations proved helpful in 'understanding India's civilisational heritage'. In 'Afterword', the author writes: "..I think that the pandits of Benares College should be viewed as pioneers, of a sort, in the articulation of renewed understanding of India's civilisational heritage within the colonial context, as well as in their explicit engagements with the colonial presentation of European knowledge" (p. 191).

*OENC* thus provides a scholarly insight into how orientalism got defined in India through Sankskrit scholars and scholarship, at time misunderstood by Europeans. Instead of criticising the Sanskrit pandits of helping the Company in getting a firm foot on the Indian soil, Dodson has shown how with their scholarship they became pioneers in articulating the national culture.

The books would be useful not only for postcolonial scholars but also historians who wish to renew (or change) their views about the pandits who more often than not have been accused of helping the East India Company to perpetuate its rule in India.

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