

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CULTURAL STUDIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Eds.

Bryan Reynolds, Ronan Paterson, Amitava Roy, Subir Dhar, Tapu Biswas

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From the Editorial Desk

This issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences* (IJCSSS, Vol. IX, No XII) has a special focus on classical Sanskrit epics, the classical, folk and modern traditions of “Bhasa” (vernacular, indigenous) writings and in English translation / transcreation.

The volume begins with a theoretical presentation on the wide-ranging connotations of the traditions of the “new” across cultures as diverse as that of the USA (making it “new” for Pound, Eliot et al) and South East Asia and the New Literatures emerging from the colonized nations of the Globe. I recall meeting Prof. Dr. Baral, in one of my “theatre trips” to India, in Shillong in the cloud-capped State of Meghalaya (“cloud” not as in computing but as in the heavens). He was then acting Vice-Chancellor (more or less equivalent to our President of an US University) in the English and Foreign Languages University, Shillong. I remember him as an affable, witty, courteous gentleman who happily showed us round the beautiful hill-top and stream-filled Campus, the Library, and some of the research work done by the students who we met. But I did notice a tinge of regret in his words over coffee and scones that his administrative responsibilities left him with little time for teaching courses. That is perhaps the reason he took a transfer to ELFUniversity in Hyderabad, the famed city of Biryani and other Persian and Moghlai gastronomic delights. Here at Hyderabad in the state of Andhra Pradesh as Prof. of Comparative Literature and India Studies Dr. Baral has ample time to happily teach courses and travel within India and abroad for academic work.

The paper reveals Dr. Baral’s extensive storehouse of knowledge of various Literatures across the globe and their theoretical interpretations and commentators from ancient time to the 21st Century present. He ends the paper by aligning himself with Goethe and Tagore and asserting that only parochial minds think of literatures being “National” and bounded by geographical borders. For Baral artists and writers belong to the frontierless Republic of Letters and their works, from Homer to Edward Albee to Vidyardhar Naipaul to Ishiguro, are all part of global or World Literature. They should be taught in the Universities not as American Literature or Japanese Literature but as texts that constitute the heritage of the world of

man: “Literature departments [should] transform into world literature departments and a comparative mode of pedagogy practised.” But for this we need good translation so that the cultural essence of a work is not lost, as David Damrosch has argued.

I have not met Pradip Bhattacharya personally. Unfortunately our paths have not crossed till now in our travels across the continents. But my Co-Editor and friend Amitava tells me that Dr. Bhattacharya currently is the greatest and most reliable authority on Mythology and the Indian epics that he has come across. I believe my friend’s assessment because Dr. Bhattacharya’s profound knowledge of Sanskrit epical literature (not to speak of Western epics!) and the parallels and analogues of both Western and Eastern mythology offered here shine out from his “Limerence and Lust as Ananke in the *Mahabharata*”. Prof. Baral should be very happy with this paper because it has global literatures and mythology as its province which only the rarest of scholars can map out and navigate through. The paper is encyclopaedic in scope and perspective. Bhattacharya’s prose and his own transcreations are limpid, luminous and models of clarity. Together with P. Lal’s transcreations of classical texts which Bhattacharya generally uses, we have a “great combo” whose distilled wisdom leaves us better human beings than when we started reading. Truly a transnational and transformative paper on a very complex and compelling theme.

Dr. Papia Mitra teaches English Literature but is globally renowned for her work on *Comparative Religion and Sanskrit Classical Indian Studies*. In *Ram-Sita vs Sita-Parvati* she traverses the worlds of mythology, sacred texts, folk literatures, iconography, popular films and her own experience of life to project Shiva-Parvati as an alternative model to Ram-Sita as the ideal husband-wife paradigm. As Dr. Mitra shows, India and the rest of the world would be a better site for human relations, especially marital relationships if the Parvati-Shiva model is absorbed and accepted.

Two scholars from the beautiful mountain and river-filled nation of Bhutan have contributed to this International Journal their thoughts on *Samskara* the renowned Indian novel which is a text in many university syllabi across the globe. Dr. S. Chitra is the Head of the Department of English of a college in Bhutan and Yangchen Lham her research scholar. Not only do they offer a different take on U. R. Ananthamurthy’s novel from the perspective of a neighbouring South Asian nation but also provide glimpses of the current state of Bhutanese Culture Studies. Bhutan’s cultural nationalist Karma Phuntsho’s perspective on the “frozen” and “dynamic” aspects of a culture reacting to social change provides an excellent theoretical frame for this joint paper.

Young lecturer Arnab Chakraborty, whose initiation into research came from working in the Tagore-Gandhi and Shakespeare Society Archives has written on contemporary theatre adaptations using folk elements. Shakespeare is central to Indian life, culture and films. Chakraborty takes up new folk versions of *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo-Juliet* in his *In Search of Folk Elements*.

Shakespeare again comes to the fore in Lopamudra Dey's paper on "Indianising" the *Merchant of Venice*. This is a valuable close examination of three translated / adapted versions in Bangla, written in the late 19th and early 20th century, to show what the authors had done to Shakespeare mainly through songs, dances and opulent settings.

Dr. Tapu Biswas, globally noted for his research and books on the Western Absurdist playwrights (specially on Beckett) and their reception in India and the subcontinent, returns to his favourite terrain. In "Indian Responses to Beckett's *Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days* (2006-2009)" Biswas once again reveals the depth and extent of his pioneering research and documentation on the Absurdist.

The rest of this impressive volume ranges far and wide across cultures, themes and forms from Soviet Russia, Australia, the U. K. and the USA.

Anurima Paul, a brilliant alumnus of the University of Calcutta currently doing research at Tagore-Gandhi Institute, provides an excellent perspective on Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, one of the great confessional protest novels to emerge from Stalin's infamous Gulags. Paul's extensive awareness of anti-Stalinist, dystopian Russian and global anti-totalitarian writings and systems is a timely and relevant reminder to us experiencing the major systemic upheavals in the USA, India and the Russia of Putin.

Premanjana Banerjee takes a close look at "troubled subjectivities" in the metafictional, postmodernist world of A. S. Byatt's novels on art and artists. Byatt is recognized equally as a scholar and a novelist. This dual preoccupation is evident throughout her fiction, with its characteristic erudition and its combination of literary and literary critical concerns – preoccupations treated most successfully in the Booker Prize winning novel *Possession: A Romance* (1990). Ms. Banerjee's close analysis highlights Byatt's interweaving of contemporary and Victorian narratives of the literary and the literary critical industries, the theme of ownership and obsession, and the complex relationship between author and commentator. Ms. Banerjee successfully reveals how *Possession* is a "kuntslerroman" with a postmodern difference.

Swati Roy Chowdhury is a well-known “Australianist” for her research and writings on various aspects of the Continent “down under”. Here she presents her critique from a postcolonial perspective on the history books that served as school text books on Australia during the late 19th and early 20th century. Her paper attempts to uncover the politics behind such writings and questions the fictionality of history and the biased manufacturing of history.

Manashi Patra is a brilliant young JRF scholarship holder who is deeply interested in the intersections between the modern, modernism and postmodernism. Here she explores T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” as a postmodern exemplar of the Gothic and finds Eliot’s poem to “perfectly suit this genre of the Gothic literature as an expression of emotional starvation filled with horror of vulgarity, the shy sympathy with the common life, the ascetic shrinking from sexual experience and distress at the drying up of the Spring of sexual emotion, and a straining after a religious emotion which may be made to take its place.”

We close the volume with Ms. Pratima Das’s transcreations of three poems of T. S. Eliot in Hindi. T. S. Eliot has been translated into most of the major Indian languages like Bangla and Marathi but surprisingly there are very few good Hindi translations. Das is the right person to do it. Her knowledge of the two cultures and two languages involved – English and Hindi- is both deep and nuanced. She has established her reputation by translating Omar Khyam, much of Shakespeare’s plays and songs; the postmodern Parsee-Indian poet Adil Jussawala who is close to Eliot in manner and matter; and other writers of note. Her transcreations of Eliot’s “Preludes”, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “Marina” read beautifully and brings us very close to the Eliotesque flavor bridging the cultural gap between English and Hindi, two very different languages. These translations are a landmark event in India’s world of translated literature.

Bryan Reynolds and Amitava Roy
For the Eds.

What is *new* anyway! Contestations in Literary Understanding*

Kailash C. Baral

“Make It New”- a call was given by Ezra Pound (1934) to energize modernist efforts in finding new ways to express oneself in experimenting with language and literary devices to create a body of literature that would portray the contemporary human condition. Scholars, those who worked on Pound and broadly on Modernism, tried to find out the source of the adage and figure out how his call almost became an obligation for modernists to experiment moving away from the practice of genteel writing to a complex literary production. As it were, modernism in western literary art may be a movement to overcome the limitations of the past. However such an effort also has historical and philosophical underpinnings. Modernism has remained a complex literary movement, and with diverse cultural and historical turns it still remains a subject of serious debate as a product of the project of the Enlightenment (Habermas and Foucault). In the diverse conversations on modernism the historical legacy of Eurocentrism remained intact in spite of the immediate context of the two world wars, resulting in fragmentation of the European sense of itself and its central consciousness that provoked Yeats to write: “Things fall apart; centre cannot hold.” For the creative writers of the age, the effort was to conceive and to remake the fragmented world in a new style opening up new possibilities breaking down old hierarchies in trying to understand the statement of Virginia Woolf that “On or about December 1910, human character changed”, taking note of the change euphemistically calling it “new”/ modern. The centrism of Europe was exacerbated with the collapse of colonialism giving birth to new voices mostly from the non-Western countries with radical creative beginnings. Such beginnings articulated the creative force in a culturally self-reflexive and

*Revised version of the Keynote Address delivered at the National Seminar on “What is “new” in New Literatures?” organised by the Department of English, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, 14-15th September 2017.

self-challenging manner. Holding a tenuous link in a love/hate relationship with an ‘intimate enemy’ that is colonialism, the creative writers from the former colonies produced a huge body of work in English language, variously labelled as Commonwealth literatures, postcolonial writings or New Literatures framed as writing back to the centre or self-reflexively writing about one’s cultural experience simultaneously interrogating and reaffirming the historical colonial link and revisiting the pre-colonial pasts.

The *new* in New Literatures does not follow the trajectory of European modernism. There is newness in the so-called writings emerging from the former colonies for the reason that these works articulate a cultural experience that is non-western, and express the same in a culture specific and culture sensitive linguistic register contesting variously some of the Western assumptions about literature, literary culture, race, gender, art and aesthetics. At the heart of the endeavour, cultural difference remains central in whatever way we may designate the body of works from postcolonial countries as protest literature, native literature in English, non-western literature, literatures of Global South. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) provides a cleavage on cultural attitudes in understanding the binary: the colonizer and the colonised. However, the self-scrutiny mode is also prevalent getting over cultural defensiveness, for most creative writers are acutely critical of the continuity of colonial modes of literary and cultural production. Said gives a call to reconceive our colonial experience beyond stereotyped structures of engagement while transforming our understanding of the past and the present in framing our attitudes for the future (17).

Most of the early writings from the colonised territories emerged from a subjugated anguish and later from diasporic anxiety in wrestling with European literary forms and the English language. However recent writings are more matured as these works are culturally conscious and self-reflexive in breaking new grounds for understanding one’s literary culture as a challenge to Western constructions of the colonised other. At a conceptual level the “new” in literatures from the former colonies underlines theoretical and cultural difference. One such example at a theoretical level could be Chinua Achebe’s emphasis on the role of the “Novelist as Teacher”(1975) that provides a radically different understanding of the author/writer in the African context vis-à-vis the West. Achebe’s novelist has a responsibility to his/her readers in reminding them of their cultural past and inheritance being self-conscious of the fact that the African past is important as a shaping force of the creative impulse being mindful of the fact that Africa was not a long

night of savagery from which Europeans (colonizers) redeemed them. He further adds that the author in Africa is a community artist and remains anonymous, while placing art at the service of the community he thus frees creative art from individual proprietorship as in the West. Such an argument condemns the western view of ‘individualism’ while privileging community ownership of art. Similar acts have been undertaken by Raja Rao (*Kanthapura*) and Salman Rushdie (*Midnight’s Children*) in the rhetorical mode in challenging English syntax and register by Indianising and chutnyfying the English language. However, there are larger conceptual debates such as the concept of literature in India, or say fantasy or proverbs as thematic/rhetorical resource in African narratives. The Indian concept of Sahitya has no connotative linkage to the Western concept of literature in terms of origin, genealogy, nature, structure and so on. Unfortunately, we have made a habit of discovering home through the address of the west. A debate is going on that India does not have a concept of literature initiated by Sheldon Pollock, among others, who in the introduction to his work *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (2003) points out that the body of scholarship available on South Asian literary cultures, while providing invaluable data, ignores “the principles that inform them” (7). Further, “What, after all, do we mean by “literature,” the primary analytical category in all this scholarship?” (7). Even the Sahitya Akademi’s nine volume work on *History of Indian Literature* as an intellectual project fails to explain what it meant by literature, maintains Pollock. “The categorical question itself is addressed only indirectly in one of the project’s working papers. There we are told that literature comprises in part “all major texts”; in part “fairy tales and tales of adventures, songs of various types and nursery rhymes”—in short, “all memorable utterances” (7). Is Pollock’s observation meant to suggest that India does not have a concept of literature or is it simply a conceptual concern? There are others who take the meaning of Sahitya to say that literature in India is not a definitional category but an expression of creative aspiration of humans in that *kavya* is given the highest status to say that the whole of Indian literary tradition has emerged from the *kavya* tradition. Noted Malayalam writer, P. Anand (P.Sachidanandan) has given a cogent explanation of the difference between Indian understandings of literature in contrast to the West: “While literature of English deals with letters, language, and composition expressed through writings etc., *sahitya* of Sanskrit denotes a social activity. Interestingly, matters like letters, writing or even language fail to find a mention under the Sanskrit word. In other words, literature inclines towards form and techniques, and *sahitya* to actual

activities” (*Indian Folk Life*: 2000:12-13). Sahitya, from the Indian perspective, is more than a weave (Latin *Literatura* or *Litera*) and more than an immanent (self originating) concept. It is a genealogical category that is tagged to diverse paramparas including both written and oral traditions (folk or lok), intersecting time and space in the formal representations of literary genres (gadya, padya, katha, gatha, puran, itihās and so on) while binding the author and the reader as co-producers. The Sanskrit dictionary meaning of Sahitya is an act of coproduction of various *dharma*s, meaning together we act, think and reflect bringing minds and traditions to a confluence not losing one’s difference and uniqueness but merging at the level of the universal. In other words, in the Indian sense the true test of creativity is to particularize the universal and universalize the particular.

What holds good for our understanding of literature in India is to bring minds and traditions together in time/space continuum thereby emphasising the particularity of a literary culture. It is pertinent to ask can we study writings in English from India as New Literature or consider such writings as part of a larger formation, products of Indian minds and traditions. The same is true of literary works coming from the Global South. The Global South has produced a huge body of literary works in English language using the native/folk narrative styles, while crafting the works on cultural mythologies (Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*). The narrative and performative arts are inspired by native models engaging with cultural pasts. Writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri, Raja Rao and others have revisited the past and revived cultural mythologies in rewriting the old in new form.

The postcolonial countries have adopted western ways of governance resulting in new structures of power hence the responses of creative writers have been to bring in changes in theme and style that may suit to the changing times and contexts. However, contemporary literary-cultural consciousness (often called postcolonial consciousness) in the writings of the writers of Global South has remained self-reflexive, rooted in native cultures except for expressing their creativity in the English language. If there is anything *new* in these literatures that happened in terms of innovations in style, language use, and literary form while in all other aspects these works have remained rooted in the cultural experiences of the authors. The West always finds ways to label such writings coming from the Global South. Such labelling as commonwealth, postcolonial and new literatures, to a large extent, is part of the politics behind the business and trade in literature. This trap, to me, is part of the academic politics of scholars both Western and from the Global

South working in metropolitan universities in the West who provide theoretical frames for such nomenclatures.

The postcolonial theory that has sustained itself on the works of Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and some others primarily focused on colonialism and its modes of constructing the native in the colonial discourse. Rest of it derives from the critical-theoretical assumptions of the West, using western frames in using data from once colonised countries. They position themselves in speaking for once colonised subjects refusing to accept independent cultural formations in culture specific contexts. Writing back may be a fact but writing for the self/community is equally valid. Writings from postcolonial countries have been constructed and discounted as national allegories (Fredric Jameson vs Aizaj Ahmad), and also in other ways. However, as cultural products the works of contemporary writers from postcolonial countries go beyond colonial/postcolonial bind as in the works of Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh, Arvind Adiga and so on. An international aspiration is clearly visible in their works. I would prefer to call these writers as Indian writers writing in English language as they are rooted deeply in the diversity of their cultural experience. In this context, it is appropriate to bring in Amitav Ghosh's refusal to accept the Commonwealth Prize for his work *The Glass Palace* as he regards the notion of the Commonwealth to be a misnomer and anachronistic. His reason for doing so is laudable for the reason that his Indian identity is not solely based on being a postcolonial subject even if colonial experience constitutes a major part of his themes. It may be argued as Neelam Mahajan has said, "The exploration of the forces that shape identity, especially national identity, has long been a pre-occupation of writers, and Indian writers in particular. At the beginning of this new century, as India sought to re-define itself, Indian thinkers were re-examining their past to help explain their present identity...While the intention of those who offer these new perspectives may not be consciously to encourage and spur on India's race to become a nuclear power and a more aggressive force in its region, that is precisely the effect of this new historical reconstruction" (2006). Historical reconstruction of identity either in re-examining the past or taking pride in national achievements such as nuclear explosion or India as an emerging world economic power, the process goes on almost in all postcolonial countries because national/cultural identity is such a sensitive issue that does not need only one set of factors but many. For example, in the Indian context the identity of national literature takes into account not only assuming the microcosm of Narayan's work as the macrocosm of the whole

country as a mainstream consciousness, but also taking note of side streams like the emerging literatures from the Northeast. Similarly the cultural difference between the Ibo and Yoruba tribes within Nigeria also reflect the same trajectory. Within a national literature difference and diversity cannot be denied.

If we put national and literary cultural identities on the same plane, I think we need to think afresh about rebranding literary products emerging from a particular national geography. Cultural geography is equally important as such a category represents the whole of cultural experience in its diversity that underlines a particular national identity. *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* no doubt are Indian cultural products as much as the works of Raja Rao, R K Narayan, Temsula Ao, Indira Goswami and all others who are writing from their cultural locations from the cultural geography of India. Such literatures need their local/regional identities to be recognised while considered as national literature beyond the labels they have been put in.

Beyond national literatures there is a talk about transnational literature in the wake of globalization. As the process of globalization is irreversible it makes sense to talk about national literatures at a larger platform of global literature. Until recently conversations on global literature has been frozen only to be reiterated moving beyond some fixed canons and celebration of the so-called great literatures. In his journal *Propyläen*, Wolfgang von Goethe, a multi faceted 19th century German creative writer wrote: “It is to be hoped that people will soon be convinced that there is no such thing as patriotic art or patriotic science. Both belong, like all good things, to the whole world, and can be fostered only by untrammelled intercourse among all contemporaries, continually bearing in mind what we have inherited from the past” (quoted in Strich:35). Rabindranatha Tagore in a way revives the spirit of Goethe in his essay “Viswa Sahitya.” Commenting on Tagore’s view of world literature, Makarand Paranjape writes: “What Tagore meant by the world literature was the essential unity of human experience and therefore of human creativity. But more than that, it signified to him the ever-evolving, never-complete edifice of the best and most authentic expression of human creativity, fashioned by so many hands, spread in so many parts of the world, but still part of the one narrative of the human race. He also believed that we reveal ourselves in the literature more profoundly than in mundane activities of self-interest and self-preservation” (53). Tagore’s approach interconnects and elevates both humanism and universalism in postulating his sense of aestheticism. In a sense, world literature brings in a large and enabling consciousness to approach the study of literature.

The study of world literature as a discipline has been promoted in the West under comparative literature. There are arguments and counter arguments on the feasibility of constituting such a discipline having a major concern about what would go into the making of a teachable syllabus. However, that has not stopped publishers such as Norton, Longman and others bringing out anthologies of world literature keeping in mind the requirements of departments of world literature. David Damrosch, in his work *What is World Literature?* (2003), according to O’Dea, “offers a much more in depth and interesting view of what he believes this literature to be” (281). He divides the book into sections such as ‘Circulation’, ‘Translation’ and ‘Production’, suggesting “the process by which a literary work becomes world literature (ibid).” In each section, “Damrosch has chosen ‘exemplary’ literature to demonstrate how each piece exists in a historical timeline from Gilgamesh to Rigoberta Menchu” (281). His last point is that “world literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time” (282). World literature, according to Damrosch moves into an elliptical space created between the source and receiving cultures.

In his 2012 work, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*, Ngugi wa Thiong’o in the context of globalization explores the epistemological and pedagogical issues involved in the reorganization of world literary space. Ngugi argues “World literature is here” but “it has not meant the end of national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness” (48). He argues for the dismantling of hierarchical schema and pedagogies that confine “texts within national boundaries or privilege certain languages and cultures, even in world literary studies” (48). Considering essentially the connective, intertextual, and international tendencies of postcolonial literatures, Ngugi envisions a structural shift in educational institutions through “the rise of departments [. . .] devoted to world literature” which would provide “room for flexibility, experimentation, and exchange”(57). Ngugi has provided a transnational perspective for the literatures of the global south that need to be treated as cultural products at par with others breaking down the hierarchies and boundaries in literary-cultural space. Ngugi has earlier argued for the closing down of the English departments while pleading for decolonization of the mind. This is an argument that certainly endorses the place of all literatures of the world being offered for study within a disciplinary mode in any institutional structure. Gayatri Spivak’s work *Death of a Discipline*(2003) calls for a new comparative literary studies in the changing times and contexts

of the world. She suspects West's commitment to difference and otherness. For her, liberal pluralism should constitute the core of comparative studies. Damrosch has argued that the works selected for a course on world literature need to value good translation so that the cultural essence of a work is not lost. Hence it is good to teach most literatures new or classical if the circulation of vernacular works is possible through good translations. Comparative study of all literatures needs to be the mode of pedagogical practice. If literature departments transform into world literature departments and a comparative mode of pedagogy practised, I think, what Tagore envisioned about world literature would come to fruition.

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Limerence and Lust as Ananke in the *Mahabharata*¹

Pradip Bhattacharya

“He holds him with his glittering eye”

Vyâsa, master raconteur, weaves together a bewildering skein of threads to create a many-splendoured web from which there is no escape, whether then or now. The millennia separating us from Vyâsa have not, surprisingly, dimmed the magic of his art that had entranced Janamejaya the king and Shaunaka the sage:

“Shells were exploding over Leningrad. Enemy bombs were falling on the streets stirring up clouds of dust. On one of those spring days during the siege, Sanscrit language was being heard in the building of the Academy of Sciences on the Neva River embankment, in a room overlooking the side that was safer during the artillery strikes. First, in the original, and then in translation, Vladimir Kalyanov, a specialist on India, was reading Mahabharata, a wonderful monument of Indian literature, to his colleagues, who remained in the besieged city. He had started the translation before the war. He translated during the hard winter of 1941, with no light, no fuel and no bread in the city. Two volumes of books—one published in Bombay and the other in Calcutta—were lying on the table in the room. In the dim light of a wick lamp, he was comparing these two editions of Mahabharata, trying to find the best and the most accurate translation of the Sanscrit into Russian.

“When, after the war the first book of Mahabharata—Âdi Parva was published in Leningrad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, noted with great satisfaction that, even during the hardest times, the translation of the Indian epic into Russian was never interrupted.”²

Indubitably, “the story’s the thing, catching conscience of commoner and king.”³ But what is it in this epic-of-epics, eight times larger than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined, denounced by Winternitz as “a literary monster” and by Oldenberg as “monstrous chaos”, that appeals so irresistibly to modern man in search of his soul, when its immediate audience—the enthroned monarch and the forest-dwelling sage—has long since sunk into the dark backward and abysm of time?

Seeking answers to questions such as these, I find a storyteller *par excellence* pitilessly laying bare the existential predicament of man in the universe. If, later in the epic, Vyâsa shows us what man has made of man, in the very first book he plumbs the depths of the humiliatingly petty preoccupations of the Creator’s noblest creation. Indeed, the dilemmas the characters find themselves enmeshed in cannot even be glorified as “tragic”. Perhaps, that is why we find the epic so fascinating—for, how many of us are cast in the heroic mould? We do not have to strain the imagination to reach out and identify with Yayâti or Shântanu. We need no willing suspension of disbelief to understand why the Brahmin Drona should sell his knowledge to the highest bidder, or why Drupada does not protest too much when his daughter is parcelled out among brothers who had routed him in a skirmish. Passions do, indeed, spin the plot and we are betrayed by what is false within; then, as now, one need not to look for a villain manoeuvring without.⁴

If we resonate in empathy with *sunt lacrimae rerum* (the sense of tears in human things), we also thrill with joy on meeting the indomitable spirit of woman in an epic that many misconceive as a paradigm of male chauvinism. Whether it is Shakuntalâ proudly asserting her integrity and berating mealy-mouthed Dushyanta in his court; or Devayânî passionately demanding that Kacha return her love and imperiously brushing aside a cheating husband; or Kuntî refusing to pervert herself into a mindless son-producing machine to gratify her husband’s twisted desires—time and again it is woman standing forth in all the splendour of her spirited autonomy as a complete human being that rivets our attention and evokes our admiration.

The Mahabharata articulates several themes: Time, Fate, the Quest for Immortality and Eternal Youth, Dharma, Blindness, the Disqualified Eldest, Desire with its sub-sets Limerence, Lust, Greed, Pride and Anger, etc. In Greek mythology Ananke (Destiny or *Daiva*) entwined in the serpentine coils of Kronos (Time or *Kâla*) encompasses the universe and is the mother of the *Moirae* (the three Fates). In the *Mahabharata*, we find Ananke manifesting as Lust and Limerence⁵ in the Lunar Dynasty.

The Beginnings

Sauti the rhapsode tells Shaunaka and his followers that Vyâsa's *kāvya* (poem)—which is also an *itihâsa* ('thus it happened')—has three beginnings: "Some read the *Mahabharata* from the first mantra, others begin with the story of Âstika; others begin with Uparichara" (*Anukramanikâ*, sloka 53). Section 63 of the Book of Beginnings (*Âdi Parva*) tells the story of Uparichara Vasu, whom Indra made king of Chedi. Why begin with him? Well, having introduced the poem (Sauti does so too at the beginning of section 60), Vaishampâyana is providing Janamejaya with an introduction to his ancestor Vyâsa whose maternal grandfather Uparichara Vasu fathered fish-odorous Matsyagandhâ on Adrikâ, an Apsarâ-turned-fish, in the dark waters of the Yamunâ:-

“Desire stirred in him.
Girikâ was not near.
Desire maddened him.
Maddened with visions of Girikâ...
the semen fell in the waters of the Yamuna...
Adrikâ rushed to Vasu's semen...and swallowed it.”⁶

— 1.63.46, 50, 57, 59

Girikâ, his queen, is herself the product of Kolâhala's rape of Shuktimatî. Thus, romantic and sexual obsession, the keynote of Limerence, is struck and its maddening impact voiced. Catching but a glimpse of fish-odorous⁷ Matsyagandhâ such lust inflames rishi Parâshara that he needs must rape her in a boat mid-stream in the Yamuna, in public view, at daytime. Yojanagandhâ, now made lotus-fragrant and a virgin again by the satiated sage's boon, keeps secret the birth of their son Vyâsa. Later, her granddaughter-in-law Kuntî, raped by Surya, is left holding the baby with the cold comfort of that same boon of *virgo intacta*. With no family support, she has to consign Karna to the mercy of the waters of Ashvanadî. Indeed, the story of the Lunar dynasty is a series of seductions, abductions and rapes: Târâ, Urvashî, Sharmishthâ, Shakuntalâ, Tapatî, Ganga, Shuktimatî, Satyavatî, Ambâ, Ambikâ, Ambâlikâ, Kuntî, Mâdri, Ulûpi, Subhadrâ.⁸

The seeds of lust were sown much farther back, the first instance being recounted by that paradigm of misogyny Bhîshma to Satyavatî, herself a fruit and a victim of this compulsive, obsessive passion. Brihaspati, guru of the Devas, rapes his elder brother Utathya's pregnant wife Mamatâ.⁹ Brihaspati's wife Târâ elopes with his disciple Chandra or Soma. As with Helen's abduction, this results in a terrible war between Devas and Asuras,

the titans espousing the cause of Chandra. Chandra, like his descendant Vichitravîrya, falls victim to consumption because of unbridled sexual indulgence. Chandra and Târâ's son Budha is the first Chandravanshî, a branch of which comes to be known later as the Kurus or Kauravas.

In ancient times, Pându tells Kuntî, women were free:-

“They slept with any men they liked
from the age of puberty;...
for the dharma of those times
was promiscuous intercourse.”— I.122.5,8

Kuntî then recounts the story of Vyusitâshva and Bhadrâ (section121) pointing out that Bhadrâ was able to have seven sons by lying with the corpse of her husband and therefore she might well have Pându's sons despite his curse of coital death. The irony lies in the close parallels between that king's life and that of Pându's putative father Vichitravîrya. For both sexual over-indulgence resulted in death:-

“So strong was their passion,
So frequent their indulgence,
that he soon fell a victim
to consumption;”— I.121.17-18

A cardinal feature of Limerence is obsession, which makes its host oblivious of his duties. Budha's son Pururavâ, the first king of the Lunar dynasty, neglecting his royal responsibilities chases after the apsara Urvashî and meets his end at the hands of sages when, greed-driven, he tries to seize their golden vessels. His grandson Nahusha, the first mortal to be chosen as king of the Devas, lusts after Indra's wife Shachi and falls to perdition.¹⁰ Nahusha's son Yayâti, learning nothing from his forefathers' tragic flaw, becomes an archetype of desire-driven man, never satiated with sensual pleasure, ever thirsting for more. Limerence baits the hook with Sharmishthâ and he is cursed by his father-in-law Shukra with senility. That is when a profound realisation dawns upon him that speaks to all humanity:-

“Kâma never ends,
Kâma grows with feeding,
Like sacrificial flames
Lapping up ghee.
Become the sole lord of
The world's paddy-fields, wheat-fields,

Precious stones, beasts, women—
Still not enough.
Discard desire.
This disease kills. The wicked
Cannot give it up, old age
Cannot lessen it. True happiness
Lies in controlling it.
For one thousand years,
My mind lusted for pleasures.
Now, instead of resting,
I lust for more pleasure”— I.85.12-15

The exhortation is followed more in the breach. Rejuvenated by his vampiric assumption of his youngest son Puru's youth, Yayāti dallies with the apsara Vishvâchî, although he had begged Shukra to restore his vigour because he was still infatuated with the sage's daughter Devayâni. Like his father Nahusha, doomed by lust, he is thrust down from Swarga. Only then does he realise that craving only brings the “bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit”¹¹ and exclaims:-

“The wise say: Seven massive gates,
Tapasyâ, charity, serenity,
Self-control, modesty, simplicity,
and compassion for all creatures
lead to heaven.
Pride cancels all these....
I gave so much,
I performed many yajñas,
I am learned,
I keep my vows’—
All vanity, all pride.
Fearful.
Give it up, absolutely.”— I.90.22, 26

His descendant Krishna repeats this lesson later to Arjuna:-

“I am rich, I am high-born,
There is none like me.
I sacrifice, I give, I rejoice.”
Deluded by such ignorance...
They fall into a foul hell....

Hell has three gates:
Lust, anger and greed.
They ruin the âtman.
Therefore, give up these three.’— Gita 16.15, 16, 21.

Limerence and lust hound the Lunar dynasts down the generations like the Furies because they are doubly doomed. Their ancestress Devayâni was obsessed with Kacha who cursed her that no Brahmin would wed her. That is why she seizes upon Yayâti the Kshatriya ruler and browbeats him into marrying her. Her eldest son Yadu is disinherited and it is his descendants, the redoubtable Yâdavas, who give in to lust and liquor and end up slaughtering one another in a drunken frenzy with the participation of Krishna himself.

Samvarana, Kuru’s father, is so possessed by the craze for hunting that his horse dies under him. Then he glimpses Tapatî:-

She stood, a black-eyed beauty
on the hill-top,
statuesque;
like a golden girl.
The hill, its creepers,
its bushes, all flamed
with the golden beauty
of the golden girl.”— I.173.27-28

Like Pururavâ with Urvashî, Samvarana exhibits the classic symptoms of Limerence:-

“his heart aflame with kâma,...
Like one possessed, he kept repeating
his love for her...
Like a man crazed
he wandered in the woods,
desperately searching...
the foe-chastising, love-smitten king
fell on the ground...
the king seemed to have shrivelled
into ashes” — I.173.41-43; 174.1; 174.4

Like Antony with Cleopatra, lost to the world in Tapatî’s arms on the banks of the Sindhu, Samvarana remains oblivious of the twelve-year-long

drought afflicting his kingdom. Taking advantage of this, the Pânc'hâlas take it over and Samvarana's priest Vashishtha has to win it back (I.94.38-46). Samvarana and Tapatî's son is Kuru, the dynast, who ploughs the field called Kurukshetra after him that becomes the scene of the bloodiest of battles in our annals.

Vyâsa pitilessly lays bare the tainted generations of Kauravas from Shântanu onwards, all afflicted with the same disease, Limerence and lust, that speeds them on inexorably to their doom, bringing home to us that,

“The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is Lust in action...
Mad in pursuit and in possession so...
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe.”— Shakespeare, Sonnet 129

Kuru's descendant Shântanu is so infatuated with strange riverside women that he remains a mute spectator to Ganga drowning their seven sons, and approves his surviving heir abdicating his right to obtain Satyavatî for him. In Shântanu's earlier birth as Mahâbhîsha his lust got the better of him in Brahmâ's court where Ganga did a Marilyn Monroe as “gusty winds uplifted her moon-white dress” (96.4) while he leered and she gazed back. Both are thrust down to earth. Ganga herself is sexually promiscuous—only in the Puranas will she become Shiva's wife—seating herself wantonly on the right thigh of Pratîpa while he is engaged in austerities and says, “I love you. Take me, my lord.” He, however, is untainted with the lust that overwhelms Ganga and Mahâbhîsha:

“Beautiful one,” said Pratîpa,
“I have never lusted for another's wife,
or for women outside my caste.
This is dharma, this is my vow.”— I.97.6

Ganga persists:-

“I am not ugly”, she said,
“I do not bring ill fortune, O râjâ
No one has cast a slur on me,
I am not unfit for sexual enjoyment.
I am celestial, I am beautiful,
I love you. Take me, my lord.”— I.97.7

She has no problem in shifting her “love” from father to son. Significantly, the limerent object for Pratîpa's son Shântanu is women who are not of his

class. Both Ganga and Satyavati are non-kshatriya river women, one celestial, the other a fisher-girl; one far superior, the other much inferior. Of his father, Devavrata might well say, echoing Rama, “I think *kâma* is much more potent than either *artha* or dharma. For what man, even an idiot like father, would give up a good son like me for the sake of a pretty woman?”¹² It is Devavrata who sets up a unique and utterly different paradigm at the opposite extreme of Yayâtian lust. He attains the acme of misogyny, abjuring women wholly, earning the sobriquet “Bhîshma, the terrible”.

The origin of Devavrata, however, is also rooted in Limerence. Dyau, eldest of the eight Vasus, was so obsessed with his wife that without a second thought he stole rishi Vashishta’s cow to please her, calling down upon the Vasus the rishi’s curse of mortal birth.

According to Wendy Doniger, “the four major addictions (are often called) the vices of lust...gambling, drinking, fornicating, hunting...the royal vices...were also associated with violence, in the double sense of releasing pent-up violent impulses and being themselves the violent form of otherwise normal human tendencies (to search for food, take risks, drink, and procreate).”¹³ The other facet of Kuru character that goes hand-in-hand with Limerence is lust for blood. It is while hunting to the point of exhaustion that Dushyanta, Uparichara and Samvarana fall victims to Limerence. Shântanu, too, spends most of his time hunting. It is while feeding this blood-lust that he meets Ganga and, swept away by Limerence as his ancestor Dushyanta was with Shakuntalâ, accepts her conditions unquestioningly. It is not, however, a one-sided affair. Ganga, the limerent object, is similarly afflicted:

“He stood there,
Entranced,
All his body
In horripilation.
With both eyes
He drank in her beauty,
And wanted
To drink more.
She saw the râjâ,
In shining splendour.
She was moved
With tenderness and affection.

She kept gazing
and gazing
and longed to gaze
even more.”— 97.28-29

Excess is the key word. At the entrance to the Delphic oracle two phrases were inscribed: *gnothi seauton* “Know yourself” and *meden agan* “Nothing in excess”. These principles ensure a meaningful life. To ignore them is to invite Ananke to step in.

It is ironic that Shântanu, whose name means “the child of controlled passions” (97.18), should be such a slave to Limerence:

“Captivated by her skilful love-making,
the rājâ was not conscious of
the months, seasons, years that rolled by.
He enjoyed her sexually in every possible way.”—I.98.12-13

Ganga is like the celestial nymphs who discard their offspring. Urvashî makes this clear to Kukutstha when he reproaches her for deserting their daughter:-

“O King, my body does not change
when offspring are born.
True to my nature as a courtesan,
I do not rear children I give birth to.”¹⁴

Shântanu is so besotted that he ignores one of his primary duties as a king: ensuring an heir to the throne. Instead, lest she abandon him, he lets Ganga drown seven sons in succession. It is only when his sexual addiction is conquered by his concern for the fate of his eighth son that the spell cast by *la belle dame sans merci* is broken. Like the ensnared knight-at-arms, Shântanu is left wan and forlorn, the dry husk of a hero, a hollow man, his heroism sucked out by Ganga like a succubus. Inevitably, in his late middle age he cannot control yet another *grande amour*, this time for a fisher-girl. Shântanu’s reaction to Gandhakâlî parallels that of Parâshara:

“She was fragrant,
beautiful,
smiling.
Shântanu saw her,
and desired her.” (100.49)

The king differs from the sage in his desire to possess for himself this beauty, unable simply to enjoy and pass on. The flaw in Shântanu's character is stressed again:-

“the fire of desire
ravaged his body...
Desire maddened him
He kept thinking
of the daughter of the Dâsa chief.”—I.100.56-57

Limerence maddens. Yayâti's warning has fallen on deaf ears.

Herself a child of sexual incontinence and a victim of it as well, Satyavati sees her adolescent son die as Vichitravîrya, like Agnivarna the last of the Raghus,¹⁵

“driven by passion, became a *kâmâtma*,
a victim of his own lust.”— I.102.64

She, “hungry for grandsons/but whose words/strayed from Dharma” (I.103.24) overrules Vyâsa's advice that the widowed queens observe a year long vow to purify themselves of the dregs of seven years of sensuality and insists that he impregnate them immediately. Ananke strikes. Expecting Bhîshma, shocked by the forbidding looks and piscine odour of the sage, they give birth to blind Dhritarâshtra and sickly Pându.

Like Yayâti and Shântanu, his lustful ancestors, Pându is addicted to the indiscriminate slaughter of animals, for, lust is

“murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel...”— Shakespeare, sonnet 129

Perversely killing a copulating deer-sage, he is cursed with coital death.¹⁶

It is now that Vyâsa explicitly voices the underlying theme through Pându's lament that he has learnt too late that,

“Noble blood is of little help.
Deluded by passions, the best
of men turn wicked, and reap
the punishment of their karma...
My father was deep in dharma,
his father was too,

But *kâma* was his ruin, he died
while still a youth.
And in the field of his lust
I was sown...
And I am a victim of the hunt!
My mind is full of killing,”— I.119.2-5

The tragedy of the diabolic fascination Limerence exercises is precisely what Shakespeare put so memorably:-

“All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.” (Sonnet 129)

The misery—it is no longer tragedy on a heroic scale—of the Kuru kings Shântanu, Vichitravîrya and Pându is that of all men, whether prince or pauper.

Pându himself, despite his desperate resolve to seek *moksha* by renouncing all pleasures, is overtaken by his karma. Clotho spins the thread of life; Lachesis measures it out and Atropos decides Limerence will cut it:-

“passion overpowered him,
it seemed that he wanted
to commit suicide, as it were.
First he lost his senses,
then, clouded by lust,
he sought the loss of his life.
Kâla-dharma ordained it...
Perished in the act of intercourse”— I.125.12-14

He falls victim to *mort d’amour* while raping Mâdrî who “fought against him fiercely” (125.10).

Of these generations of Kauravas we can say with Milton,

“...they, fondly thinking to allay
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit
Chewed bitter ashes.”— *Paradise Lost*, X.564-566

When Karna shouts in the dice-game hall about Draupadî,

“The gods have ordained one husband only
for a woman; she has many;
that’s proof enough she’s a harlot...
...strip her naked.”— II.68.37, 40

And when, encouraging Karna, Duryodhana lewdly bares his left thigh to Draupadî (II.71.11-13) it is lust that becomes Ananke. The retribution is terrifying: of eighteen armies only ten men survive.

Draupadî is the mysterious *femme fatale* in the *Âdi Parva* (I.196), weeping tears that turn into golden lotuses in the Ganga, who leads the infatuated Indra away from Yama's yajna into the presence of Shiva playing dice with his consort. His discrimination overcast by Limerence, Indra does not recognise Shiva, arrogantly berates him and is imprisoned in a cave with five earlier lustful, arrogant Indras (Vishvabhuk, Bhutadhâmâ, Shibi, Shânti and Tejasvi). All are sentenced to earthly life as the Pândavas accompanied by the *cherchez la femme* Shrî who becomes Draupadî. Limerence has determined their destiny.

Draupadî, in particular, is a locus of Limerence. She is the only woman to be described in some physical detail in the epic as she emerges gratuitously from the yajna-altar, full-grown:-

“eye-ravishing Pâñchâlî,
Large-black-eyed,
Dark-skinned Pâñchâlî,
Lotus-eyed lady,
Wavy-haired Pâñchâlî,
Hair like dark-blue clouds,
Shining coppery carved nails,
Soft eyelashes,
Swelling breasts
Shapely thighs...
... Blue lotus
Fragrance for a full *kroshta*
Flowed from her body.”— I.169.44-46

A skyey announcement proclaims her as the cause of the destruction of the Kshatriyas and the terror of the Kauravas (I.169.49).

The second occasion is when Yudhishtira describes her before staking her in the gambling match:-

“...neither short nor tall,
neither dark nor pale,
who has wavy dark-blue hair,
Eyes like autumn lotus-leaves,
fragrant like the autumn lotus,

lovely like autumn itself,...
never offending anyone,
graceful and patient and gentle,
Gifted with all the gunas,
soft-spoken and sweet-speaking,
the ideal wife for the pursuit
of dharma, artha and kâma.
She is the last to sleep,
The first to wake,
even earlier than the early-rising
cowherds and shepherds...
Her sweat-bathed face is lovely
Like the lotus, like the jasmine;
She is slim-waisted
Like the middle of the sacred *vedi*,
Long-haired, pink-lipped,
With not excessive body-hair...”— II.65.33-37

Jatâsura, who abducts her, is warned by Yudhishtira,

“You will be like one who drinks poison
after shaking the vessel.”— III.157.27

Bhîma voices the interlinking of Ananke, Kronos and Limerence:-

“...today wonder-working Kâla
Has possessed your mind
to ravish Krishnâ-Draupadî.
You have swallowed the bait
on Kâla’s hook—
you are caught like a fish,
you will die like one.”— III.157.44-45

Like Helen of Troy, she is fully conscious of her sexual power but is never a slave of her libido. Satyabhâmâ begs for the secrets of female sexuality by which she keeps her husbands at her beck and call (III.222.7), but finds she does not need any drugs or mantras to do so. We see telling examples of how she gets her way with Bhîma in Virâta’s kitchen (IV.20) and succeeds with Krishna in turning his peace-embassy into a declaration of war (V.82).¹⁷ The captivating pose she strikes when alone in Kâmyaka forest that so enchants Jayadratha is another instance. Leaning against a *kadamba* tree,

holding a branch with an upraised hand, her upper garment displaced, she flashes like lightning against clouds, or like the flame of a lamp quivering in the night-breeze (III.264.1). Jayadratha craves her because,

“...women and jewels
are meant for frivolous enjoyment...”

Jayadratha attempted

To remove her breast-garment...”— III.267.27; 268.24

She condemns him as a “lustful rascal” (III.271.45) whose libido only brings utter humiliation crashing down upon his head.

Next it is Kîchaka for whom Draupadî becomes the limerent object:-

“The fire of my passion consumes me
like a merciless forest-blaze;
all it desires is to be one with you,
O lovely one...
I am driven wild

By the arrows of Manmatha

and the hope of intercourse with you.”— IV.14.24,26

Limerence takes away even the basic instinct of self-preservation. Kîchaka was

“Lust-maddened, adulterous-minded
though aware of the consequences”.— IV.14.44

His sister Sudeshnâ’s warning falls on deaf ears:

“You have completely forgotten
what is good for you.
You have allowed yourself to become
a slave of *kâma*.
Your end is near. That is why *kâma*
grips you so strongly....
The absolute fool had a single obsession:
intercourse with Draupadî.”—IV.15.17-18; 28

The end Ananke visits upon him is horrifying: Bhîma pounds him into a shapeless lump of flesh.

Why should Draupadî be such a locus of Limerence? Clues are found in the *kathas* of her previous births. The Kumbakonam edition of the epic records that in an earlier birth as Nâlâyanî-Indrasenâ (daughter of Nala and

Damayantî?)¹⁸ she was married to Maudgalya, an irascible, leprous sage. Her devotion to him was so absolute that even when his thumb dropped into their meal, she took it out and calmly ate the food without revulsion. Pleased by this, Maudgalya offered her a boon, and she asked him to make love to her in five lovely forms. He obliged, but as she was insatiable, he reverted to asceticism. When she remonstrated and insisted that he continue their love-making, he cursed her to be reborn and have five husbands to satisfy her sexual craving. Thereupon she practised severe penance and pleased Shiva who blessed her with five husbands and the boon of regaining virginity after being with each husband.¹⁹ The Jaina *Nayadhammakahao* tells of suitorless Sukumarikâ reborn first as a celestial courtesan because of her sexual craving and then as Draupadî.²⁰ In the *Brahmavaivarta Purana*²¹ we find that she was the reincarnation of the shadow-Sîtâ who, in turn, was Vedavatî reborn after being molested by Râvana. This Châyâ-Sîtâ became the Lakshmî of the fourteen Mahendras in Svarga, five of whom incarnated as the Pândavas. After the fire ordeal, the lovely and youthful shadow-Sîtâ was advised by Rama and Agni to worship Shiva. While doing so, *kâmâtura pativyâgrâ prârthayanti punah punah* (tormented by sexual desire and eager for a husband), she prayed again and again, asking the three-eyed god five times for a husband (14.57). In each of her many origins, therefore, Draupadî's nature is characterised by high libido.

However, as with the previous generations of the lunar dynasts, no lesson has been learnt about the deadly coils Limerence winds about its victims while immobilising them with its basilisk stare. Even Krishna, the Purushottama, cannot save his kith and kin from self-sought annihilation. Thirty-six years after the Kurukshetra holocaust, the Yâdavas, Bhojas, Kukuras, Vrishnis and Andhakas (all descendants of that archetype of pride and lust, Yayâti and his lustful queen Devayânî) rush like mindless lemmings into mass suicide. The extreme penalty Krishna and Balarâma impose to prohibit manufacture of liquor (impalement of the violator and his entire family) fails. In their very presence at Prabhâsa the clans plunge into a drunken orgy. The cardinal flaw in the character of the Vrishnis, as with Yayâti, is arrogance which blinds discrimination:-

“They mocked Brahmins
and *pitrîs* and gods.
They insulted gurus and elders...
Pouring wine in the food
prepared for mahâtmâ Brahmins,

the Yâdavas fed the wine-flavoured dishes
to *vânara*-monkeys.”— XVI.2.10; 3.14

With arrogance and drunkenness went lust hand in hand:-

“Wives cheated on husbands,
and husbands
cheated on wives.”— XVI.2.11

To this deadly combination was added the explosive spark of anger as
Satyabhâmâ, learning who had killed her father,

“burst into angry tears.
She sat in Keshava-Krishna’s lap,
and instigated Janârdana-Krishna.”—XVI.3.24

As Krishna glanced angrily at Kritavarmâ, the murderer of his wife’s
father, Sâtyaki lopped off his head. The carnage exploded:-

“Demented with drink,
the warriors butchered one another...
falling like fleas in a flame.
Not one of them had the good sense
to flee the carnage.”— XVI.3.42-43

The roots of man’s doom are revealed in the parable Vidura narrates to
solace-seeking Dhritarâshtra in the *Strî Parva* which travelled to the West to
feature as the story of “The Man in the Well” in the tale of Barlaam and
Josaphat:-²²

“Take a certain Brahmin who loses himself in a dense jungle
filled with wild beasts. Lions and tigers, elephants and
bears... Yelling and trumpeting and roaring... a dismal scene to
frighten even the god of death, Yama. The Brahmin is terror-
stricken. He horripilates. His mind is a bundle of fears. He begins
to run, helter-skelter; he looks right and left, hoping to find
someone who will save him. But the fierce beasts—they are
everywhere—the jungle echoes with their weird roaring—
wherever he goes, they are there, ahead of him.

“Suddenly he notices that the fearful forest is swathed in a
massive net. In front of him, with open arms, is a horrendous-
looking female. Also, five-headed snakes hiss at him—tall snakes,
their hill-huge bodies slithering up to the sky.

“In the middle of the forest is a well covered with grass and intertwining creepers. He falls in that well and dangles there, clutched by a creeper, like a jackfruit ripe for plucking. He hangs there, feet up, head down.

“Horror upon horror! In the bottom of the well he sees a monstrous snake. On the edge of the well is a huge black elephant with six heads and twelve feet hovering at the well’s mouth. And, buzzing in and out of the clutch of creepers, are giant, repulsive bees surrounding a honeycomb. They are trying to sip the deliciously sweet honey, the honey all creatures love, the honey whose real taste only children know.

“The honey drips out of the comb, and the honey drops fall on the hanging Brahmin’s tongue. Helpless he dangles, relishing the honey drops. The more the drops fall, the greater his pleasure. But his thirst is not quenched. More! Still more! ‘I am alive!’ he says, ‘I am enjoying life!’

“Even as he says this, black and white rats are gnawing the roots of the creeper. Fears encircle him. Fear of the carnivores, fear of the fierce female, fear of the monstrous snake, fear of the giant elephant, fear of the rat-devoured creeper about to snap, fear of the large buzzing bees... In that flux and flow of fear he dangles, hanging on to hope, craving the honey, surviving in the jungle of *samsara*.

“The jungle is the universe; the dark area around the well is an individual life span. The wild beasts are diseases. The fierce female is decay. The well is the material world. The huge snake at the bottom of the well is *Kala*, all-consuming time, the ultimate and unquestioned annihilator. The clutch of the creeper from which the man dangles is the self-preserving life-instinct found in all creatures. The six-headed elephant trampling the tree at the well’s mouth is the Year—six faces, six seasons; twelve feet, twelve months. The rats nibbling at the creeper are day and night gnawing at the life span of all creatures. The bees are desires. The drops of honey are pleasures that come from desires indulged. They are the *rasa* of *Kama*, the juice of the senses in which all men drown.”²³

Dhritarashtra, of course, misses the point Vidura is making: man, literally hanging on to life by a thread and enveloped in multitudinous fears, is yet

engrossed in the drops of the honey of the senses, exclaiming, “*More! Still more! I am alive! I am enjoying life!*” And, like the blind king, we tend to miss the point too. Ignoring the law of karma, taking that other road, we fall into the pit and rale; yet inveterately, compulsively, perversely, strain every sinew to lick the honey of Limerence. The Buddha figured it forth in a characteristically pungent image:

“Craving is like a creeper,
it strangles the fool.
He bounds like a monkey, from one birth to another,
looking for fruit.”²⁴

In a marvellously eidetic image Vyâsa portrays the secret:-

“A wondrous *kâ mavriksha* grows in the heart,
a tree of desire, born of attachment.
Anger and arrogance its trunk,
impulse to act its irrigating channel.
Ignorance its root; negligence nourishes it.
fault-finding its leaves, past misdeeds its pith.
Grief, worry and delusion its branches,
fear its seed.
Vines of craving clasp it around
creating delusion.
All around this fruit-giving mighty tree of desire
sit greedy men,
shackled in iron chains of desire,
craving its fruit.
He who snaps these bonds of desire
slices this tree
with the sword of non-attachment.
He transcends grief-giving age and death.
But the fool who climbs this tree
greedy for fruit,
it destroys him;
even as poison pills destroy the sick.
The roots of this tree reach far and wide.
Only the wise can hew it down
with the yoga-gifted
sword of equanimity.

One who knows
how to rein in desires,
and knows study of desire itself binds,
he transcends all sorrow.”

— *Shânti Parva* 254. 1-8 (my transcreation)²⁵

Despite this, Bhishma’s lengthy discourse on Dharma and Krishna’s *Anugîtâ* what does the creator of this greatest of epics cry out at the very end?

“I raise my hands and I shout
but no one listens!
From Dharma come Artha and Kama—
Why is Dharma not practised?”

— *Svargârohana Parva*, 62

A question that does indeed tease us out of thought into eternity. But, is anybody listening? Is there anybody there? Or, are we a host of phantom listeners, kin to the decimated Kurus, who listen but do not answer Draupadi’s question in the *dyûta-sabhâ*?

Notes

1. Sanskrit words occurring in the OED have not been italicized.
2. http://www.300.years.spb.ru/eng/3_spb_3.html?id=5
3. P.Lal, Preface to *The Complete Âdi Parva*, Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2005, p.6. All extracts from the *Mahabharata* are from the P. Lal transcreation unless indicated otherwise.
4. cf. George Meredith’s “Modern Love”.
5. Coined by Dorothy Tennov in 1977: an obsessive need to have one’s romantic feelings and sexual attraction for another reciprocated, the state of being completely carried away by unreasoned passion or love, even to the point of addictive-type behaviour. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limerence#Limerent_reaction
6. P. Lal, *The Complete Adi Parva*, Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2005.
7. The medical term is “trimethylaminuria”, a syndrome associated with psychosocial reactions including social isolation.
8. Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, p. 295, which I have amplified.

Limerence and Lust as Ananke in the Mahabharata

9. *Adi Parva* 104.9-15. Mamatâ's son is the blind Dîrghatamas, ostracised for publicly following the practices of the cow-race, i.e. indiscriminate sexual intercourse. He makes a living out of insemination. He looks forward to sightless Dhritarâshtra, father of a hundred and one sons.
10. Indra himself suffers serious consequences after his adulterous union with Ahalyâ (losing his testicles and being covered with marks of the vulva). His attempt at another liaison with Ruchi, wife of the sage Devasharmâ, is foiled by the disciple Vipula. This is where Indra's "fate" differs markedly from that of the Greek Zeus and the Norse Odin who are also lusty kings of the gods but do not suffer for their adultery unlike the tragic Norse hero Siegmund and the Greek Paris.
11. T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding" in *Four Quartets* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=435714070>
12. *Râmâyana* 2.47.8-10, Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus*, Penguin, New Delhi, 2009, p.225.
13. Doniger *op.cit.* p. 320-321. *Laws of Manu* Book 7 states: "[47] Hunting, gambling, sleeping by day, malicious gossip, women, drunkenness, music, singing, dancing, and aimless wandering are the group of ten (vices) born of desire. [48] Slander, physical violence, malice, envy, resentment, destruction of property, verbal abuse, and assault are the group of eight (vices) born of anger." Vikarna addressing the Kauravas in the *Sabha Parva* says, "Kings have four major vices—hunting, drinking, gambling and womanizing." (II.68.20) (personal communication from Doniger)
14. *Kâlikâ Purâna*, 49.67, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1384 BS, p.462, my translation.
15. Kâlidâsa paints a detailed portrait of this voluptuary ruler, the last of the dynasty of Raghu: "it was the disease resulting from sexual excess which consumed him... paying no heed to the doctors' advice, he did not give it up." *The Dynasty of Raghu*, XIX.48-49, translated by R. Antoine, Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 1972, p.216.
16. Saudâsa Kalmâshpâda who killed a copulating hermit was cursed similarly by his wife—*coitus interruptus* with a vengeance!
17. P. Bhattacharya, *Pancha-kanya*, Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2005, pp. 73, 77-78.
18. In the Rig Veda X.10.2 there is an Indrasenâ-Mudgalânî, a heroic lady who bravely drives her chariot and helps her husband to win numerous cattle (cf. H.C.Chakladar, "Some Aspects of Social Life in Ancient India", *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol.2, 1962, 2nd ed., Kolkata.

19. Satya Chaitanya's translation of the Kumbakonam edition of the *Mahabharata, Ādi Parva*, sections 212-213 <http://vyasabharata.blogspot.com/2010/12/nalayani-past-life-of-draupadi.html> . Vettam Mani, *Puranic Encyclopaedia* (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, p. 549) and M.V. Subramaniam, *The Mahabharata Story: Vyasa & Variations* (Higginbothams, Madras, 1967, pp. 46-47) mention this story without providing the source.
20. B.N. Sumitra Bai, "The Jaina Mahabharata" in *Essays on the Mahabharata* ed. A. Sharma, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1991, p.253.
21. *Prakriti khanda*, 14.54 and *Krishna Janma khanda* 116.22-23.
22. *The Golden Legend*, <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/golden329.htm>
23. P. Lal: *The Mahabharata* (condensed & transcreated) Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, p. 286-7.
24. P. Lal: *The Dhammapada, op.cit.* Farrar Straus & Giroux, New York, 1967, p.157
25. In an analogous image, the cosmic fig tree itself is figured forth by Krishna in the Gita (15.1-3) along with the remedy:-

“Mention is made of an eternal ashvattha
whose roots are above, whose branches are below
whose leaves are said to be the Vedas.
The knower of this tree
is the knower of the Vedas.
Its branches reach out below and above,
nourished by the gunas.
Its flowers are sense-pleasures.
Below the tree in the human world
flourish more roots
binding man to karma.
You may not see its real shape,
nor its end, birth and presence.
Slice this firm-rooted ashvattha
with the sharp sword of non-attachment.”

— conflating the P. Lal transcreation, Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1969 and P. Lal, *The Complete Bhishma Parva*, Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2006, p.261.

Ram-Sita vs Shiva-Parvati: a re-imagining of the ideal wife

Dr. Papia Mitra

In the Indian cultural trope marriage is a sacrament. In Hinduism, it is one of the obligatory samaskaras for both men and women if they wish to lead a dharmik life. However, much more has gone into defining the role and duties of a wife in theological, philosophical and sacred lawtexts than that of a husband. The obvious reason is that society is patriarchal and the texts are written by men, though perhaps a few portions were by women. So we hear the term ‘*stridharma*’ as a category by itself, but not *patidharma* though the texts are clear that ‘*putrathē kriyete bharya*’. However, role of a wife as bearer of children is not really the problem. It is that she must always be under the control of her husband. The very term *kanyadan* implies she is a commodity exchanged between two men. Whether North or South India, it is held that to be a devoted wife is the dharma of a female. *Manusamhita* decrees, “Even if a husband is devoid of all good qualities, is ignorant and an adulterer yet the wife must serve her husband as a god”(5: 154) and “A wife can perform no separate yagna, nor make vows or observe a fast without permission from her husband; only by worshipping him can she be exalted in heaven” (5:155). *Tirukkural* asserts that a wife should be “chaste and skilled in household works. A good wife who begins her day by worshipping her husband instead of any other god gains such power that if she says let it rain it will rain”(1:6). Supernatural powers in legends too are associated with being a faithful wife. A woman who dies before her husband is termed *saubhagyabati* or an auspicious woman — but the auspiciousness consists of having a living husband.

It is within this belief framework that Ram-Sita is often held up as the ideal couple to whose conjugal felicity all married partners should aspire to. Her devotion, her willingness to follow her husband anywhere, her uncomplaining submission to whatever dictates Ram inflicts on her is stressed

repeatedly. Young girls are taught to emulate her virtues and brides are blessed that they be like Sita. Her story is told and retold in countless festivals and educational books meant to impress upon young girls what their aim in life should be. During marriages in North India, the idealized wedding of Ram and Sita is described and Sita Mangal songs are sung so that the bride is blessed with ideal conjugal life like the married life of Ram and Sita. (Jassal 168). This is somewhat odd if one looks at the mental cruelty she suffered at Ram's hand. However Ram's behaviour is smoothed over or not mentioned. Instead the focus is on how Sita is the most virtuous wife because she suffered uncomplainingly while remaining devoted to Rama without thinking of another man or disobeying him. That she is the model wife is implicit in the stories recited, proverbs, songs and rituals. Internet sites nowadays fulfil the same functions retelling the story of Sita's greatness as a *pativrata* and advice on how women should behave to be like her. One is reminded of the story of patient Griselda who accepted her husband's apparent murder of their two children and made arrangements for his second wedding cheerfully: it is a narration through which the clerk wished to teach how a proper wife behaves. So too Sita is benevolent and regulated, passively accepting whatever happens with grace. The concept is so pervasive that even courts are victims to it: "A wife should be like Goddess Sita who followed her husband Lord Ram into the forest and stayed there for 14 years," the Bombay high court said while hearing a plea filed by a husband seeking divorce on the ground of his wife's unwillingness to shift to Port Blair with him. (Hindustan Times, 14/3/18) As such while Ram is the *maryada-purushottom* Sita becomes his counterpart of the perfect virtuous woman.

This automatically raises the question of whether from a female perspective they can really be regarded as the idealized married couple. On one level the glorification of Ram as the ideal husband is understandable: he is *ekam-patni-vrata*, Ram had only one wife throughout his life; even after he had banished Sita and was without any male heirs, he refused to take another wife and in the great yagna he built a golden statue of Sita to take the place of *patni*, mistress of yagna. He is attractive as a husband in his fidelity when polygamy and male sexual infidelity are the norm. It is again true that for many Sita is not weak willed and often her deeds, especially her final rejection of wifehood and motherhood, has become sites of resistance for countless ordinary Indian women. There are enough hints in the text to imagine a different kind of heroine (Hess 17). It has come out in interviews

that for many women Sita's sense of dharma is superior to Ram and she puts by her flawless conduct even the most perfect of men to shame (Kishwar 239). Many women poets have presented the story with Sita as heroine and Ram as a person to be criticized as in Chandrabati's *Ramayan*. However, the patriarchal framework in the presentation of Sita is too glaring to ignore — her whole existence centres round what her husband wants and fulfilling them.

Of greater interest in this matter is why a couple is not blessed to be like Siva-Parvati; from beginning to end their story is highly romantic and their conjugal life is one of harmony and felicity. Like any couple they also quarrel and sometimes separate from each other but ultimately they are a happy couple. Shiva is never unfaithful or cruel while Parvati is never submissive. In fact their commonest symbol is that of the linga and yoni which must be installed and worshipped together, an inseparable but equal relationship. (*Linga puran* Part 2 chapter 47). It is interesting that Parvati is considered by many foreign scholars to be the ideal wife: virtuous, motherly, whose purpose is to domesticate Shiva so that he may become a householder. She teaches a woman's purpose is to take care of her family and help her husband on the path of enlightenment. However it does not take into account that a good wife is not all she is. *Shivpurana* repeatedly stresses that when Shiva became arrogant with the thought that he is the Lord of the Universe, Parvati always shatters his pride: as there is no difference between the two there is no question of superiority or inferiority. After all, the two of them make up *ardhanarishwar*. Stories and iconography depict them sitting side by side talking, playing dice, dancing, arguing, laughing, discussing philosophy and theology, bringing up children together and involved in intense dalliance. It is not surprising that all through India unmarried girls carry out rituals on Shivaratri to gain a husband like Shiva, not Rama. Yet the brides are not urged to be as happy as Parvati or husbands to be like Shiva.

I suggest that this is because this particular couple violates the norms of patriarchy. Sita humbly accepts male guardianship but Parvati never. Parvati had been born as Sati first, daughter of Daksha. She had married Shiva against her father's will. When Daksha arranged a yagna without inviting his son-in-law, Sati goes uninvited to his house though her husband forbids her to go. But Daksha relentlessly insults Shiva and her choice until out of rage and humiliation she burns herself. Here we find that she refuses to be the obedient daughter and instead defies her father to marry a man of her choice. Even as

a wife she disobeys her husband to meet with her mother and sisters and demand an explanation from her father. In her next incarnation as Parvati she is again not content to sit quietly at home. Instead she initiates action and actively woos Shiva. As per mythology, gods are anxious for Parvati to marry Shiva to produce a son to lead their army in battle. However the story morphs beyond son-preference model since Parvati from birth knew who she is and she wanted Shiva to be her husband. That their relationship is different is understood and stressed in popular re-enactments: while Ram-Sita's wedding ceremony is grand and solemn, Shiv-Parvati marriage celebration is a joyful and carefree one.

Again, after marriage she frequently quarrels with her husband and disobeys him. Indeed in one version they live in her father's house, and when Shiva wants to leave their house when she does not she manifests the Mahavidyas to physically restrain him, an enterprise in which they were successful. As Kinsley points out, "that Siva dwells in Parvati's house implies her priority in their relationship. Her priority is also demonstrated in her ability, through the Mahavidyas, to thwart Siva's will and assert her own". (28). Another interesting example is the story of Meenakshi, a human incarnation of Parvati; She fought with Shiva on the battlefield as an equal and after wedding him she takes her consort back to her natal city of Madurai to live with her, an inversion of patrilocal customs. Such behaviour goes against the accepted belief that the wife has no independence and must accept husband as *patiparemeshwar*. Here the husband literally is *Parameswar* but the wife also asserts her status as literally *Parameswari*. In this context it is interesting to look at *Stridharmapaddhati* by Tryambakayajvan, a Maratha writer of the 18th century. He dedicates his conduct book to Parvati but regards women's salvation lying solely through serving her husband since she cannot take part in any religious ritual or learn Vedas. A good wife obeys her husband without regard for her own life; she should accept whatever he does including sale of herself; she should do what is morally wrong in other circumstances, like sleep with another man, if her husband wishes it. (305–317). For a scholar like Leslie the invocation of Parvati is the reminder of a wife whose self-effacing devotion brought her the ultimate reward of being half of her husband literally. (323). However, I think this view of Parvati is coloured more by Western habit of strict categorization: she ignores that Parvati is also the Dasamavidhyas, and thus exhibits a full range of powers and personalities that is lacking in Sita. Furthermore Parvati creates Ganesha by herself, independently of Shiva who is accepted into the godly pantheon.

Shiva's behaviour too goes against patriarchal ethos. When he loses Sati he slings her body on his shoulder 'like a garland' as the texts put it and performs his tandava dance. After the body is removed he refuses to take another wife, as prescribed by shastras, and instead sinks in deep meditation cutting himself off from the world. In some legends he started dwelling in cremation grounds as a reflection of his desolate soul. He is moved to action only when Parvati/Sati starts wooing him. Indian culture itself recognizes this. Kalidasa in his *Kumarsambhavam* focuses on Parvati and her deeds. Her birth, her activities and her triumph in getting what she wants is recorded, instead of Shiva's deeds. "She is the first proper heroine of a *kavya* who takes on the role and function reserved for male heroes" (Tubb). As a husband Shiva is not only devoted but also does not infantilize his wife or expects her to obey him. Instead they move throughout their stories as equals.

From Sita's story we take away the message that the good wife is the submissive wife and she is always inferior in the hierarchy of her home to her husband. Even as part of a divine couple this ideal of wifeness is constructed round her. Her tale cannot be separated from Rama's : "She further does not exist apart from him. Unlike other female deities, her image never appears on its own in household or temple shrines. She is worshipped along with him." (Hirst 9). The human wife is expected to take on her mantle. The blow is sought to be softened by the argument that a woman's lot is luckier than that of a man because of this. Vyasa says that women are blessed in *kaliyuga* because in this age, i.e, the contemporary age, women are not required to do anything except serve their husbands to get liberation. (*Vishnupuranam*: 6th khanda, second adhyaya). One is reminded of Milton's line, "He for God only, she for God in him". This is simultaneously a prescriptive and reward ideology for women. While men have to perform many penances and works to gain *moksa* a woman can do it easily without knowing any Vedas or performing religious rituals; the other side of the coin is that this can happen only as long as she has no will of her own, completely accepting patriarchy. However Shiva-Parvati offers the example of equal partnership and happiness. This is why the latter is far more suitable as a blessing in marriage and yet the traditional conjugal model ignores this particular conception of womanhood and wifeness.



(source: By Nagarjun Kandukuru from Bangalore, India - Shiva and Parvati, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37254903>) Here Shiva and Parvati are standing side by side with Shiva's hand curled lovingly around her waist but she is not gazing adoringly and submissively at her husband. Here neither is subordinate to the other. It shows a couple in easy relaxed relationship.

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**Hollowness of Cultural Hegemony in
U. R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara***

S. Chitra and Yangchen Lham

Literary and Cultural studies focuses on the relations between literature and key political and social issues such as cultural formation, ethos and eidos of culture, abstract and materialist aspects, the identity crisis and values. It emphasizes the study of entire range of society's arts, beliefs, institutions and communicative practices. Culture is a way of life and every human society has its own purpose and its meanings. Culture is the set of beliefs, law, morals, customs, and way of life and social organization of a particular place acquired by human beings as a member of society. Culture is produced out of the material, historical and social conditions of the time. However, for Marxist scholars the analysis of literature or culture involved "an analysis of not only the ideology inscribed within a particular text, but several other conditions such as the economic background, the social tensions within a particular period, and the conditions of production and reception of such cultural text". (Introduction, p. 2). Every nation rests on its unique cultural identity. National identity is not an inborn feature rather it is essentially a social construct. People incorporate identities by adopting beliefs, values, assumptions and social expectations to align with one's national identity which later became their culture and tradition. "Caste is the basis of a lot of our culture," says Ananthamurthy (2008, p. 387). One's identity lies in their culture. Culture has its own set of rules with good effects but it also has the effect of using power for wrong reason. **Thus, culture must be dynamic, monitoring its own sustainability and ability to transact between modernity, equality and tradition.**

Ananthamurthy's first novel, *Samskara* (1965) is one of the acknowledged masterpieces of modern world literature. The novel first written in Kannada is a fictional negotiation between the tradition and modern point of view. Though the novel provoked controversy in Brahmin and Hindu communities

due to its negative narratives on Brahmin orthodoxy, it became an award-winning masterpiece. As claimed by biographical critics, the author's life, education and socio-cultural environment have influenced the novel *Samskara*. Ananthamurthy wrote this novel because he was influenced by the great Kannada novelist Shivaram Karanth's short story, *Chomana Dudi* (1933) a tragic tale about an 'untouchable' who wanted to own land. After reading the story, Ananthamurthy became a keen observer of himself and the society around him. Ever since, he wanted to write a story on the socio-cultural reality of the place he lived in. Nearly after twenty years during his second year of research in Birmingham, Ananthamurthy and his doctoral guide Malcolm Bradbury watched Bergman's movie titled, *Seventh Seal* that dealt with the theme of spiritual crisis in medieval Europe. At the end of the show, Professor Bradbury asked Ananthamurthy to write a novel similar to the movie. In fact, the film presented God's silence, human suffering and death due to plague which became the inspirational idea for Ananthamurthy's seminal work. This challenge provided him with an opportunity to write in his mother tongue Kannada, with which he was losing touch for the past two years. It was also a good chance for him to express his long nurtured ideas in writing. Therefore, he wrote *Samskara* excitedly in Kannada keeping alive his childhood and boyhood memories.

Ananthamurthy inherited the world of tradition and modernity since his boyhood which created conflict within him. The twin sides of Ananthamurthy's persona were influenced by his orthodox grandfather from whom he availed traditional Sanskrit education and by the priest. On the other hand, he was influenced by his autodidact modernized father and the western perception such as Modernism, Existentialism, Liberalism and Marxism. These diverse influences created oscillations and dichotomies in him and were expressed in his writing, particularly in his first novel *Samskara*. Ananthamurthy entered the world of letters after India's independence when the country was shaping its national identity. His works are strongly rooted in their local context that established his reputation as a scathing critique of his own community, its biases, superstitions and hypocrisies.

India being a context sensitive country, they practice diverse cultures. According to anthropologist Geert Hofstede, culture is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of the one group from another" (as cited in Schaller, Conway & Crandall, 2004, pp. 7-8). Similarly, Manu's law segmented people living in India into four major caste systems as Brahmins who are considered as teachers and intellectuals,

Kshatriya or the warriors, Vaisya or traders and Sudras or workers. Each caste has its own culture and tradition. Brahmins occupy the prime position in the varna hierarchy because they are believed to be the intellectuals born out of Brahma the creator's head. Brahmins are also considered as 'dvija', the twice born. They are expected to go through two births unlike other castes. One birth is their physical birth and the other is during upanayanam "sacred thread ceremony" or initiation into adulthood and scholarly learning, thus attaining *gyana janma*. According to Manu's law, Brahmins are meant to teach and study the Veda, sacrificing their own benefit for others, and living by the code of giving and accepting of alms. The lord prescribed Sudras to serve other higher castes. However, with the flow of time, the occupations are manipulated and Bhraminical hegemony was established and maintained in the society. In this fixed and accepted social system, Ananthamurthy could perceive a gap between what was believed to be true and what was practiced in the society. Brahmins started asserting their superiority in the social ladder and the notion of purity and pollution formed the caste system. They started differentiating and discriminating on the basis of class and caste. Other low castes were pushed to periphery and were treated as 'untouchables'. "...there was so much of social injustice in Indian society, of which the caste system was a glaring example, that living in a village was hell for an untouchable" (Ananthamurthy, 2008, p. 378). Untouchables along with their identity and culture are subjugated. Ananthamurthy, being Brahmin, became a keen observer of his own community to identify and criticize its negativity along with few positive aspects. Being born in an educated family as an intelligent and sensitive person he developed an acute critical awareness of his community and its socio-cultural norms.

Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* depicts Brahminical socio-culture during the 1930s and 1940s in south India where the author himself grew up and faced an intractable challenge. The novel opens with cleansing ritual, one of the central purification rites of Brahminism. The antagonist Naranappa mirrors Ananthamurthy who is influenced by modern education. Ananthamurthy criticizes the hollowness of Brahmin orthodoxy with a strong desire to break its stereotypes. Ananthamurthy considers Brahmin culture and religion as an instrument to fulfill their selfish motives. Through hedonist Naranappa, Ananthamurthy exposes the evil side of the caste-conscious Brahmins and shows his resistance against Brahmin culture and tradition posing a direct attack: "Try and excommunicate me now. I'll become a

Muslim, I'll get you all tied to pillars and cram cow's flesh into your mouths and see to it personally that your sacred Brahminism is ground into the mud"(p. 18). Though Naranappa is against the Brahmin orthodoxy, he is not cast out officially from the Brahmin community because if he is excommunicated, he will become Muslim and bring more Muslims into their community which will pollute the *agrahara*. Further, Naranappa's death and the central question of performing his final death rites challenged the orthodoxy of Brahminical practices and its cultural norms. The question of cremation occupies central stage because no one can perform their daily rituals and eat except for the children according to Brahmin culture until the corpse was cremated. The question became complex because when Naranappa was alive he rejected all Brahminhood; he had Muslim friends, invited them to his house, ate flesh and married a *Sudra* woman after divorcing his lawful Brahmin wife. Due to Naranappa's hedonist behaviour, *Madhva* Brahmins believe that if they cremate Naranappa, they will get polluted so nobody wanted to cremate him. The death of Naranappa uncovers the hypocrisy and hollowness of the whole Brahmin *agrahara* and their orthodoxy.

The Brahmin's materialistic desire is exposed through the 'heap of gold', when Chandri, Naranappa's concubine comes forward and places all her gold ornaments in front of the Brahmins to request them to perform the last rites of Naranappa and to bear the expenses of his cremation. At that juncture, all the Brahmins changed their mind, became adaptive and more than willing to perform the death rites. Chandri's generosity complicated the situation and the situation got its reversal. "Besides the dominant wish to maintain their ritual purity and orthodox superiority the behaviour of the Brahmins expresses envy, jealousy, greed and even deceit" (Aikant, 2011, p. 30). At first, nobody wants to get polluted by cremating the polluted Naranappa, but after seeing the gold, Brahmins and their wives wanted to cremate the body and they forgot about purity and their sanctity. "The women kept staring at the heap of gold and they were disappointed by their husbands' words" (p. 18). The eyes of the Brahmins turn moist and their mouths water for the gold and they want to carry out the last rite. Other minor Brahmin characters in the novel are drawn from Ananthamurthy's own community because Ananthamurthy saw hollowness in those Brahmins. As stated by Sharma 2012, Brahmins are full of revolving dimensions of lust and worldly desires. Their lives are full of immoral actions as they do not meet the standards of morality. To support Sharma's claim, Moorty (2004) found Brahmins as greedy, gluttonous, mean-spirited; they love gold, betray orphans and widows;

they are jealous of Naranappa's every forbidden pleasure. The scenario of gold symbolises their hypocrisy and greed.

Praneshacharya, the protagonist partially mirrors the other half of Ananthamurthy who has learned in a 'Veda Patsala' and is rooted in Brahminism. Like Praneshacharya, Ananthamurthy's upanayanam was performed during his entry into Vedic learning and he was a devout Brahmin. However later Ananthamurthy moved towards modern education and modernity rather than perusing Vedic learning. Praneshacharya titled 'Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning' faithfully carries out the ritual regularly with other Brahmins in the agrahara. Brahmins practice rituals as their routine activities without knowing their real essence. "Ananthamurthy attempts to expose Brahmanical cultural dominance, and unmasks the religious hypocrisy through his novel" (Bodhale & Karankal, 2016, p. 586). Praneshacharya, the central pillar and spiritual leader of the agrahara of Durvasapura is not without flaws. He shows hollowness in his spiritual life by thinking that he could attain moksha by skipping some of the stages for liberation. He uses Bhagirathi, an invalid woman as a stepping stone for the salvation. "By marrying an invalid, I get ripe and ready" (p. 10), was his ardent belief. According to Hindu belief, life was divided into four 'ashramas' which are the essential parts of 'dharma: 'brahmacharya', 'grahasta' (householder), 'vanaprastha' and 'sanyasa'. It is important to experience all the stages sensually along with material and spiritual quest which will lead to maturity and as a result one will be able to withdrawal from worldly life. Praneshacharya thinks that he was in the second stage of 'ashramas' but he did not experience sensual pleasure and family life having married an invalid woman and was childless. Since he skipped the fundamental aspects of 'dharma', his desire for salvation was not fulfilled. Due to his selfish motive he even fell from spiritual grace.

Other Brahmins reflected in the novel are driven by greed, jealousy and superstition in contrast to their prescribed roles of sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting of alms. At first no one volunteers to perform the last rite of hedonist Naranappa. However, when his concubine Chandri places her gold ornaments in front of the Brahmins to meet the expenditure of his last rite, the Brahmin relatives of the deceased forget their restrictions and volunteer to cremate the body of Naranappa. Some even overcome their hesitation and secretly sneak to their priest Praneshacharya's house to have permission on cremating the body.

Child marriage as part of Brahmin culture and tradition is also exposed in the novel through the widow Lakshimidevamma. Women marry as early

as eight years old and when their husband die, they are excluded from all the privileges starting from the way they dress. “Because she was a child-widow, they called her Lakshimidevamma the Ill-Omen” (p. 45). Lakshimidevamma represents all widows of the Brahmin community. She married at eight, widowed at ten and later her mother-in-law and father-in-law died. Thus, her relative Garuda’s father and Garuda usurped all her property and jewellery and pushed her into her husband’s old ruined house without any belongings. Therefore women and ‘untouchables’ are under constant surveillance of the power of patriarchy and male Brahminical hegemony. Even their monastery guru exhibits hollowness and selfishness in Brahminism. “Which means, the right and proper duty is to perform the death-rites. But the impurity must also be cleared-therefore all his property, silver and gold must be offered to the monastery to lord Krishna”. (p. 84). The guru seizes all the property of deceased Naranappa in the name of god and for the sake of purification.

The incidence of plague in the novel is a reflection of the incidence the author experienced during his boyhood. Ananthamurthy intentionally included this incident to emphasize the hollowness of Brahmin culture and their rigid tradition. The plague in the other Brahmin agrahara, Parijatapura is controlled by inoculation by city doctors whereas plague in orthodox Brahmin agrahara, Durvasapura spreads like wild fire causing more deaths along with more rats. Though both the places are the agrahara of Brahmins, Brahmins of Parijatapura are considered as inferior because they are heterodox and they welcomed modernity. Brahmins of Durvasapura are considered as superior due to their orthodox devotion towards their dogma. Death after death in Madhva Brahmin agrahara and disfiguring of the body of Naranappa and its stench shows decadence in the agrahara. The plague reaches the ghetto section of ‘untouchables’ and causes many deaths. After the death of family members, ‘untouchables’ set fire to the thatched mud huts in order to stop the spreading of epidemic. For them there is no other option because the doctors of the upper caste will not come to inoculate them as that will result in touching them. However, when Brahmin men make secret physical relation with low caste untouchables, they do not feel polluted. This shows clearly the hypocrisy of orthodox Brahminism who treats the untouchables as less than humans.

The Brahminical culture is surrounded with many sacred artifacts. Brahmins worship them regularly without understanding their value. The antagonist Naranappa sees this meaningless culture of Brahmin and attacks these sacred artefacts. “He comes to the river in full view of all the Brahmins and takes the holy stone that we’ve worshipped for generations and throws it

in the water and spits after it!” (p. 14). By such depictions, Ananthamurthy wants to prove that “the stone was a stone” (Ananthamurthy, 2000, p. 62). Naranappa uses names of great sages like Durvasa, Parashara, Bhrgu, Brihaspati and Kashyapa who did set the tradition for Brahminism. Naranappa did this to remind Praneshacharya that even such sages failed to overcome their lust, emotions and anger. Such anti-brahminical arguments of Naranappa shows its resistance against rituals and artifacts. Though Naranappa is not from socially disadvantaged group, he represents lower castes and uses the artifacts and rituals of dominant culture industry to create subversive message.

Brahmins are also not supposed to eat until proper funeral rites are performed. “Only we adults shouldn’t, till the funeral rites are done”. (p. 11). This ritual is inhuman because some Brahmins nearly die of hunger. Some Brahmins go to other lower castes to survive from starving. For instance, Madhva Brahmin Dasacharya goes to Parijatapura, the agrahara of Smarta Brahmin who are lower in caste than Madhva Brahmins. Dasacharya then begs food from Manjaya, a rich man of Parijatapura. Baral, Rao & Rath (2009), argues that Brahmin culture is like a prison-house where they are bounded by numberless rules. “Anantha Murthy has portrayed a culture with its internal constraints as a prison-house” (Baral, Rao & Rath, 2009, p. 21). For Baral et al. Brahmins of the agrahara are seen as victims of the prison-house. In contrast to the ‘prison-house’, there is also a free space which is occupied by untouchables. For instance, Sudra women Chandri occupies this free space because untouchables are not restricted by any laws and they can take their own decisions. Unlike Brahmin women she can travel wherever she likes and has the liberty to decide on the cremation of her husband when all the Brahmins including their priest Praneshacharya couldn’t take any decision in performing the final rites of Naranappa. Therefore, Brahmin culture is more ritualistic than humanistic.

Brahminical hegemony was maintained strictly in the name of culture and rituals of Brahminism. “Anantha Murthy presents this diversity not only through the characters with their different attitudes but also in the way in which the social-psychological struggle is expressed in different discourses and actions” (Raval, 2009, p. 116). Casteism and untouchability were the major issues along with patriarchal power during Ananthamurthy’s time in the Brahmin society. The traditional homes of Brahmin elites are metaphor of their hegemony and power. The front yard of the house belongs to men folk. “This space in the front yard, framed impressively by massive well-carved pillars was a place of authority, and cheerful and full of the new

tidings of the temporal world outside, as well as of the spiritual world beyond” (Murthy, 2009, p. 33). The back yard of the house belongs to women where they talk on matters like everyday sorrow and disease, which they are unable to share with their men. Women are restricted from participating in men’s talk and from the front yard. The world of front yard and the back yard are different and things discussed in the back yard are different from what is discussed in the front yard. Thus, men dominated the front yard of the house shows male authority with male talk making women invisible and restricted to their back yards.

As portrayed in the novel, in reality it was the upper class Brahmins who ruled and governed other castes living in the community. Upper caste Brahmins excluded other castes people from the rights that are easily available. For example, entry into the premises of temple and into the houses of Brahmins are prohibited for low caste people believing that they are polluted and dirty. Ananthamurthy illustrated how ‘untouchables’ are looked at in his society. “This system simply exploits the low caste people and women in numerous ways in the name of so called socio-cultural and religious establishments” (Pandey, 2014, p. 613). Ananthamurthy raised sensitive issues of subjugation and oppression of ‘untouchables’ and women in caste and gender hierarchy of Brahmin community of his childhood time. Upper caste male dominated the community and their women are viewed as ‘performer’ of the tasks assigned by the male heads of the family. “You shut up now. Why are you prating in the assembly of menfolk?” (p. 20). Though Lakshmana agrees with wife Sitadevi regarding Chandri’s jewellery he did not allow her to raise her voice because he thinks that his status as a husband would be lowered in the public eye. Brahmin women in *Samskara* are deprived of opportunities to voice their views on any subject or make any decision. They are supposed to worship male supremacy and mostly were confined to housekeeping and child nurturing within the male power.

Conclusion:

As argued by Karma Phuntsho (2015), the cultural nationalist of Bhutan, culture must be dynamic but not hostile towards adaptation and modification of traditional cultures to suit the prevalent aesthetic or utilitarian values and needs of today. Along this line of thought, Ananthamurthy, the socialist, tries to dismantle the Brahminical dogma and the caste hierarchy to ensure equality and dignity to all sections in the society. Ananthamurthy uses the ideology of Karl Marx and Gandhi who have influenced him and the culture studies

pursued at Birmingham University to a great extent: "...for Gandhiji had begun to find fault with our orthodox society and I used him to rationalize my feelings". (Ananthamurthy, 2000, p. 59). Both Marx and Gandhi are for egalitarian society focusing on classless society. According to Marxism, society all over the world has different classes that use their power to exercise control over others. Contrary to the established power-relation and politics, Marx and Gandhi urged the people to become conscious of their rights in society. Similarly, Ananthamurthy adopts the strategy of using rational mode of modernism to curb conflicts in the culture specific-social-reality of the tradition-bound rural society of Karnataka. There must be a fine balance, progressive change and innovative rethinking about the culture so that the society can pride its cultural preservation and the essential fabric of the cultural identity is not lost. As cited by Phuntsho (2015), it is not feasible to insist on traditional plough and yoke when more effective technologies are available. Therefore, the society must find ways to be rid of rigidity and steer cultural change towards positive humanistic directions.

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**In Search of Folk Elements:
A Study of Some Recent Theatrical Adaptations**

Arnab Chakraborty

Theatrical adaptation of a literary or cultural text makes a shift from its particular socio-cultural ambience to a new world or new perspective where the ‘new text’ or the adapted version is performed or re-presented. It is a movement from page to the stage concentrating on the multi-sensory communicative approach for the sake of entertainment. Besides entertainment an adaptation also aims to be of socio-cultural and literary significance. It is also an attempt to free the source-text from its particular geo-political locale and connect with the global scenario. My special focus is on some recent Indian theatrical adaptations of western plays to find the cultural confluence where a plethora of folk elements are used as the focal point of these performances. From the aspect of their immense popularity it is clear that the folk elements play the pivotal role in the dramatization of the literary texts with artistic perfection. At the same time the aesthetic values of this genre of performing arts is enhanced to a significant extent. Even in the days of scientific advancement and technological prosperity, traditional forms of entertainment like folk-theatre and culture are still very much popular among the spectators.

The background or the conceptual framework of this paper is very much related to the interdisciplinary approach to the study of literature, folklore and performing arts. One of the most popular definitions of folklore is -

“Folklore is the total creation of the life- practice and ideational pursuit of mainly collective, spontaneous and anonymous effort of an integrated society “

Chattopadhyay, Tushar. “Towards a Definition of Folklore”

The concept of life-practice can be identified with spontaneity and enthusiasm of the day-to-day practices of a community ultimately replete

with the aesthetic beauty through different manifestations of performing arts where folklore and instances from folk culture become important to nurture the cultural practices of a group of people in the lap of rustic life. Thus folk culture can be interpreted as an inseparable part of the entire cultural identity of the entire community, nation or group of people from time immemorial. As theatre is one of the most popular genres of performing arts, the relevance of folk elements in the perspective of its popularity should be explored.

Indian theatre has a long and far-reaching history of enacting western plays adapted into the context of its own socio-cultural significations. The journey started from a Bengali adaptation of *The Disguise* by Lebedev, a Russian scholar and Indologist along with Goloknath Das in 1795 in the then Calcutta stage. Subsequently we have seen a plethora of Indian theatrical responses to western plays. Besides adaptations a host of translated versions of western texts into many Indian languages like Bengali, Hindi, Marathi and Telugu are available. We have also found a Sanskrit adaptation of a Shakespearean play too. In 1892 a great Sanskrit scholar Krishnam Acharya adapted Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as *Basantika Swapnam*. During the 1960s and 70s Bengali theatrical adaptations of western texts enthralled the spectators. In this context, 'Teen Poisar Paala', an adaptation of Brecht's *Three Penny Opera* by Nandikaar (one of the most popular and notable theatre groups in Kolkata) is considered a landmark. We have numerous playtexts adapted from Shakespeare, Ibsen, Brecht and Chekhov. Important books have been written and research have been done on the adaptations of the late 19th and 20th centuries. But we don't have much documents or research on the plays performed in the first two decades of the 21st century. Such new adaptations can be approached from the disciplines and framework of cultural studies, folk literature, and multiculturalism and of course performance studies.

Recent adaptations have added a new dimension and direction to the cultural confluence between the East and the West. Shakespeare has been very popular through adaptations on Indian stage (and film too) since 1960s and 70s. Some recent adaptations are also trying to nourish and add to that legacy. In this paper I shall take up three recent productions. These productions/ adaptations or appropriations are :

1. 'Macbeth Mirror' (Bengali) from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*
2. 'Fagun Raater Goppo' (Bengali) from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

3. 'Romeo and Juliet' (Bengali, English and Hindi) from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

'Macbeth Mirror' by the theatre group Kalyani Kalamandalam, is directed by Dr. Shantanu Das and translated from the original text by Prof. Duttatreya Dutt. Here, *Macbeth* is no longer confined to the geographical boundaries of its Scottish setting and meets up with a very popular mythological perspective of Indian culture. The play starts with three witches dressed in red and white sarees, a typical Indian cloth for women and invoking the evil spirits called Prets or Pretatmas and also a hint of worshipping goddess Kali - goddess of both creation and destruction; both protection and punishment. Some people worship her for benevolent powers while some others invoke her to nurture their evil intentions. Here the goddess is a manifestation of darkness and evil power.

The frequent use of Indian musical instruments like Indian drums (dhaak, dholak or dhol) and bellscalled kasar-ghanta clearly suggest typical Indian folk rituals. They also use oil lamps, in Bengali pradip and earthen pots for invocation and worship to relocate *Macbeth* into the world of Indian book culture.

The director uses innovative techniques that move the audience. The three actors presenting three witches at the beginning gradually switch over to enact other characters and the total dramatis personae is enacted by these three. This effect of multi-characterization is also a popular convention in the form of folk-theatre. They never leave the stage and completely change their attires. While playing the role of a woman they put on sarees and while enacting a male character they put on girdles red in colour to symbolise the valour of vaunted masculinity. Their expressions, gestures and postures and the use of props are performed with artistic perfection. Another important aspect is that in 'Macbeth Mirror' the conventional gaps or breaks between the acts and scenes in the dramatic text is avoided and presented as a one act play.

'Macbeth Mirror' is also replete with symbolism. The use of hanging ropes can be interpreted as the multi-layered knots of the play and also the threads to connect the different segments of both emotion and action. At the end the protagonist Macbeth is found entangled by the knot of the ropes symbolising the knot of sin and nobody comes to free him from punishment. The black spots on the foreheads of the women and their black dresses signify the presence of evil and cruelty. *Macbeth* is not rooted in Scotland here. The

“Mirror” in the title obliquely reflects Macbeth’s evil practices as occurring universally, specially in the praxis of Indian folk and tantric tradition.

‘FagunRaaterGoppo’, an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, is a production by Rabindra Bharati Theatre Repertoire and directed by Dr.Tarun Pradhan. The play is translated by Prof Soumitra Basu. Like ‘Macbeth Mirror’, ‘Fagun Raater Goppo’ too breaks the shackles of the geographical locale of the source text and becomes more vivid in the context of the Orient. In this adaptation the source text is presented and performed in the perspective of folk theatre. The rich cultural heritage of Bengali folklore nurtured in the cradle of rural landscape far from the din and bustle of busy city life,become seloquent here.

The theatrical devices that are used here can be traced with different generic divisions. They are folk music presented by folk musical instruments, folk dance, folk song and the folk artand crafts. It also uses some traditions of old folk theatre like Jatra or Opera. For instance the play begins with the folk conventions of an opera. At the same time it presents a prologue stating the ideas of the play like the Greek prologues and the Sanskrit “nandi” traditions. Here the characters remain the same but their appearances are totally transformed. Truly we see the global meets the local here.

Critics have welcomed this multicultural folk adaptation of Shakespeare with open ground: Debesh Chattopadhyay, in an article published in *The Times of India* (dated 10.12.2016) asserts:

“...with its splendid use of folk elements and Shakespearean humour, ‘Fagun Raater Goppo’ easily stands out as the best Shakespearean production in contemporary times.”

Professor AnandaLal writes in *The Telegraph* (dated 30.01.2016) -

“...Pradhan’s vast expertise in Bengali folk forms enables him to employ a range of performatory modes from Raibeshe to Leto, the Bhanr style of farce and the rhythms of dhamsa and madal, and a set heavily reliant on homegrown rope and bamboo craftsmanship.”

It also presents the contemporary relevance of folk theatre or the folk elements in theatrical adaptations even in these days of rapid urbanisation. With the shift of the setting in this production the source text is found in a new attire.

It also presents the convention of play within the play with the presence of the fictitious 'Bharati Opera' and by keeping the Shakespearean flavour of the text relating to the aspect of entertainment by performing a play in the auspicious marriage party of Theseus and Hippolyta. The conventional crisis or knot in the plot of a comedy is also tactfully presented. The complicative world of mystery and magic especially in forests are excellently performed by Puck by the instructions of his master Oberon on the stage.

The aspect of the depiction and presentation of popular culture is also relevant to this production. Some riddles and popular proverbs are used which are easily accessible for the audience. A few popular Hindi songs are also included. The frequent use of folk musical instruments adds another dimension to the whole arena of entertainment through performing arts. At the end a chorus is sung as an epilogue reminding us of the true spirit of comedy which highlights reunion and celebration of life with the triumph of joys and happiness over all pain and difficulties of life.

'Romeo and Juliet', is an adaptation from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* by Mukul and Ghetto Tigers, a London based theatre group directed by Mukul Ahmed. This play also incorporates the rich heritage of Bengali folk culture and musicality in using the traditions of Bengali Paala Gaan, a kind of opera or musical dramatic performance found in the rural areas of Bangladesh and West Bengal. Paala Gaan is one of the most popular forms of folk theatre in India performed as a major form of entertainment for the rural people who have little access to the urban theatre and multiplexes.

The multilingual production must also be praised for the nice synchronisation between the different languages like English, Bengali, and Hindi. At the beginning a chorus is presented to invoke Goddess Saraswati, Hindu goddess of learning and culture for a successful performance. Just after the invocation using the folk tradition of Paala Gaan a prologue is presented to inform the spectators about the play and its setting and the approximate duration of the production.

Usually in Paala Gaan the whole play is performed with a number of songs sung by the dramatis personae or by the singers and musicians located in the corners of the stage. The word Paala means a dramatic performance and Gaan means the songs or chorus. It has an intimate resemblance with the folk tradition of 'Jaatra' in rural West Bengal and Bangladesh. A number of popular folk songs and folk musical instruments are used in the production. Like Paala Gaan, it is a complete fusion of song, dance and story telling.

Using another folk tradition, this adaptation also incorporates multiple-characterisation, that is, on stage an actor presents multiple characters changing his / her attire completely or partially.

At the wedding ceremony of Romeo and Juliet, taking place in secret, a Sylheti (Sylhet is a province in Bangladesh) folk song is sung as a chorus pointing to the conventional rural ritual of the marriage song in celebration of the arrival of the new groom, here called 'daman'. Internationally renowned Shakespearian actor, director and scholar Prof. Amitava Roy congratulated director Mukul Ahmed and the cast saying "you caught the essence of Shakespearean drama with its sudden shifts between moods and modes from high tragedy to comedy. The West tends to forget that music is central to Shakespeare as it is in our folk and classical traditions. You have made Shakespeare completely Indian and returned us to our folk roots. Conservatives may carp against you, but carry on regardless. It was a great evening for the audience who enjoyed every bit of multicolour Shakespeare. Carping critics have also had their say. Some thought that this production distorted and destroyed the essence of Shakespearean tragedy by ending with a song of celebration after the tragic death of Romeo and Juliet."

To conclude, it can be said that these theatrical adaptations or appropriations find new and unexplored dimensions of theatrical performances mixing the global and the local and contributing to the contemporary development of theatrical practice in both page and the stage which has immense socio-culture significance. Here, though the source-texts or focal perspectives are borrowed from the West but it concentrates on creating a uniqueness in performance by incorporating new devices into theatre to contextualize the cultural fusion.

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The Merchant of Venice - Indianized

Lopamudra Dey

The Merchant of Venice was one of the most popular plays among the Shakespearean plays enacted or studied in India. It was frequently enacted and quite a few adaptations and translations have been made during the 19th and 20th century. This paper focuses on *Bhanumati Chittobilas*, the very first Bengali adaptation made in 1852 by Hurro Chandra Ghosh, *Surolata Nataka*, a Bengali translation/adaptation made by Pyarilal Mukhopadhyay in 1877 and another adaptation *Saudagar* by Bhupendranath Bandopadhyay in 1915. All three writers had admitted that their effort had been to popularize Shakespeare's great work to the Indian audience. They had faced some problem in accommodating the play to the Indian culture. So, a few changes had been made and characters of the plays changed to acclimatize it to the Indian audience /stage.

In the very first adaptation, Hurro Chandra Ghosh had changed the locations of the play *Bhanumati Chittobilas* to Gujarat (Venice) and Ujjain(Belmont) though the characters were speaking in Bengali. Here Charudutta is the merchant of Gujarat substituting Antonio in the original play, whose friend Chittobilas (Bassanio) is to woo Bhanumati, the princess of Ujjain, substituting Portia in the Shakespearean version. Unlike the original play, we are introduced to the King of Ujjain, Birbar and the queen Chandraboli who declares a 'syamvara' for their daughter Bhanumati to make the best selection of husband for her. We see Charudutta encircled by a group of friends like Chittobilas, Chitrosen, Chandrasen, Joydev and Sahadev. Chittobilas wants to participate in Bhanumati's 'syamvara' and asks for monetary help to Charudutta who for the time being lacked liquid money and therefore borrows ten thousand rupees from Lakhapati Roy, a miserly moneylender of Gujarat who substitutes the character of Shylock in the original play. As in the original Shakespearean play, in exchange for the money Charudutta had to sign a bond. If he failed to repay the money after three months, he had to part with half 'sera' of flesh cut from his breast. Two

parallel love affairs develop between Chandrasen and Sashimukhi, the daughter of Lakhapati and between Chitrosen and Sushila, the daughter of King Birbar's counselor. We have two other contenders at Bhanumati's 'syamvara' Kandarpaketu, the prince of Kashi and Bijoyketu, the prince of Kalinga replacing the prince of Morocco and the prince of Aragon in the English version .

The striking points to be noted in this adaptation are change of locations, introduction of new characters , change in the exposition of the play, inclusion of song and dance sequences. Hurro Chandra Ghosh wanted to domesticate the play in his adapted version for his Bengali readers. Perhaps, Ghosh changed the location of Venice to Gujarat because Gujarat was the main centre of business in western India from ninth to twelfth century. From historical references we come to know, that it facilitated the trade and commerce between southern and northern India¹. From the eighth century Gujarat became the hub of the overseas trade and the main outlet for north Indian goods to west Asian countries². Therefore it was quite likely the appropriate substitution for Venice in the Indian context. His selection of Ujjain for Belmont was also perhaps keeping in mind the importance of the city in medieval India as the economical and cultural hub. Ujjain contributed to the trade between north and south India and was the residence of the rich and the aristocratic who were patrons of art and culture. Thus we find references to Ujjain in Sanskrit plays like Kalidas's *Meghadootam* ³. We find that though Ghosh had strictly adhered to the content of the play apart from a few changes, the format of the play has been totally changed. He has introduced the concept of 'syamvara' which is an Indian classical concept used in the epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* to appropriate the play to the Indian context. The lottery scheme used by Shakespeare in the original play and the concept of 'syamvara' were similar in certain aspects. In both the cases the women had no power to choose their husbands but leave it to their fate. In both cases, the scheme was designed in such a way that the best and ablest suitor could be selected. However, in the original version Portia was bound by her father's will and so she had less freedom to choose her own husband whereas the 'syamvara' allowed greater freedom of choice.

Regarding the nomenclature, one finds the names of characters in the adapted version bear similarity with their characteristic traits. 'Chittobilas' which in Bengali means a person who finds pleasure in luxury, foppery, recreation and enjoyment and engages in all these activities to please his heart, mind (chitto). 'Bhanumati' in Bengali means a bright and beautiful

lady. The word 'bhanu' refers to the sun. From historical references we find Bhanumati was the daughter of King Bhoja, the ruler of Paramar dynasty and she was famous for her jugglery and magical spells. Bhanumati in the play is a rich and beautiful lady who is going to save Charudutta from the clutches of Lakhapati. Chittobilas is a spendthrift, pleasure seeking man who loves to spend his life in luxury. 'Charudutta' refers to a charming, handsome man and is apt for the character he is playing. 'Lakhapati' refers to a wealthy man, a millionaire and that is apt.

Ghosh had used the format of the Sanskrit plays. *Bhanumati* begins with a 'Saraswati bandana' and later many song and dance sequences have been used in keeping with the Indian tradition. In the nineteenth century there was no indigenous theatrical model in Bengal. The theatre houses enacted the original Shakespeare plays in English, which could not win the hearts of the general Bengali audience⁴. So the attempt to Indianize the play was definitely done on the lines of the Sanskrit plays as it was the only indigenous model available to the adapters. The invocation to Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and fine arts is a classical tradition to please the goddess and seek her blessings before proceeding into the writing venture. We get such instances in works of Kalidas⁵. The invocation to spring season is also significant since the play is going to create a romantic atmosphere where three pairs of lovers will be united. Ghosh has used interestingly a blend of poetic and prosaic language, which however was not similar to the colloquial Bengali language used by common people in the nineteenth century.

In *Bhanumati*, we see ten additional characters compared to the English version. Here we find Sabitri (Lakhapati's wife), Kalu Roy (a barber), Ganganayek (a messenger of the royal court of Ujjain), Sadananda (a jester), Birbar (king of Ujjain), Chandrabali (queen of Ujjain and Bhanumati's mother) who have considerable significance in the play. In the original play however we do not find Shylock's wife, Portia's mother, a barber or a jester. Ghosh perhaps wanted to stick to the Sanskrit dramatic pattern where kings, queens, jesters, commoners were all present in the royal setting. Where Shakespeare highlighted on European mercantilism giving emphasis on the Rialto in Venice and the monetary transaction between the Christians and the Jews and how the latter dominated the economic and financial matters that enhances the hatred between the two different races, Ghosh altered his focus to romance and romantic elements.

In the original play, it is Antonio, the merchant, who is the protagonist, around whom the plot revolves and hence the play is named *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare had not made it very clear whether the merchant

referred to in the title of the play is Antonio or Shylock. He has been either willfully vague or absentmindedly vague. But in Ghosh's adaptation, the focus is shifted to the female lead Bhanumati, who saves the merchant Charudutta from the clutches of Lakhapati and her union with Chittobilas and thus the title *Bhanumati Chittobilas*. Most of the Sanskrit plays by Kalidas like *Abhigyanashakuntalam*, *Raghuvansham* and *Meghadutam* have highly romantic appeal⁶. The plot which made the original play so popular a Shakespeare play amongst the Indian audience could not retain its effect in the adapted version. Somewhere the play had lost its sharpness, comic sense and appeal. In *Bhanumati*, the tussle between Charudutta and Lakhapati is not racial but of class, between the aristocrat, the elite and the merchant class. This has perhaps reduced the degree of animosity between the two. The dialogues of Shylock and his asides and soliloquies that have raised the sympathy of the audience and the racist spirit that had catered to the Elizabethans are missing in the adapted version. The adaptation focuses on romantic appeal but due to its inclusion of a plethora of songs, dances, unwanted characters suffered from looseness of plot.

The Bengali translation/adaptation *Surolata Nataka* made by Pyarilal Mukhopadhyay in 1877 changed the locations to Billamancha (Venice) and Ratnagarh (Belmont). Here we are introduced to the rich merchant of Billamancha, Dharmasil (Antonio), his best friend Basantakumar (Bassanio) and his other friends Sushil (Gratiano), Chandrasekhar (Lorenzo) and Sarachandra. Similar to the original version of the play, Basantakumar falls in love with Surolata, the rich lady of Ratnagar (Portia). To woo her he takes the help of his close friend Dharmasil. Dharmasil unfortunately did not have cash at hand and so had to borrow three thousand 'takas' for three months from Somdatta (Shylock), the moneylender of Billamancha on condition that he would cut one 'ser' of flesh from any part of his body if he fails to return the money. Here also two parallel affairs develop between Chandrasekhar and Bilasini, Somdatta's daughter (Jessica) and Bijoy and Sushil.

We do not find any reference of Billamancha in history or mythology but Ratnagarh probably is Ratnagarh, a location in Rajasthan, which is used to replace Belmont. It is a fort city as the historical reference goes. It was a place well known for businessmen, learned people, great saints, literary persons, poets, artists, 'vaidyas' and great patriots⁷. So, it was perhaps an appropriate substitution for Belmont where the rich lady Surolata resided. Pyarilal Mukhopadhyay had kept the adapted work close to the original version. He had not changed the content of the play and has not added many

minor characters. The language used is not very poetic. Mukhopadhyay has kept it lucid and prosaic. This translation comes twenty five years after the first adaptation *Bhanumati Chittobilas* and has tried to keep the spirit of the play intact. The focus of the play is however not on the merchant Dharmasil but on the female lead Surolata evident from the title of the play quite akin to the former adaptation. The locale have been changed, names of characters altered, language simplified to keep the form, content and the spirit of the play close to the original. Mukhopadhyay confesses in the preface, that it was his humble effort to pay tribute to the maestro Shakespeare and to please the Indian readers, who were unable to read the original text in English.

My third text for discussion is another adaptation *Saudagar* by Bhupendranath Bandopadhyay in 1915 almost six decades later in the early twentieth century. Here, the settings have been shifted to local regions of Bengal. The business centre of Venice has been shifted to the province of Gour at present known as Malda and the site of romance re-located to Saptagram from Belmont. In this adaptation we are introduced to Anil kumar (Antonio), the merchant of Saptagram along with his bosom friend Basanta kumar (Bassanio) and their friend Niranjan (Lorenzo). As par the original play, Basanta kumar is eager to woo Pratibha (Portia), the daughter of the business tycoon Mahatab Sresthi, but unfortunately lacks money and so turns to his friend Anil kumar for financial help. Anil kumar also lacked cash and therefore went to Kulrik Sresthi, a moneylender of Gour, the equivalent of Shylock to borrow three lakhs of rupees for three months. Kulrik lends money free of interest but makes him sign a bond that in case he fails to return the money, he would cut half 'ser' of flesh from any part of his body. We also find two parallel love stories developing between Niranjan and Juthika, Kulrik's daughter who represents Jessica in the English version and Ahlade, Kulrik's servant and Niraja.

Bhupendranath in his attempt to Indianize the context has shifted his locals to regional provinces in Bengal. Gour has a long historical background and came into prominence during the sixth century⁸ and was mostly prosperous during the Pala dynasty of Bengal(9th-12th century). Its strategic location near the Indo-Bangladesh border along the banks of Ganges made it a favourable site for south Asian trade. So, Bandopadhyay had made an appropriate substitution for Venice by selecting Gour as an important trading centre where Anil kumar, the rich businessman and Kurik Sresthi, the moneylender reside. Saptagram History tells us that was also known as Satgaon and was a major port, a chief city and for sometime the capital of southern Bengal in ancient and medieval times located at present in Hooghly district of Bengal⁹. The architectural remnants indicate the prosperity of

Saptagram in the earlier Hindu and Buddhist period¹⁰. The Portuguese arrived in Saptagram in the sixteenth century¹¹. From different account of travelers we come to know that it was a rich city where merchants and traders from Middle East came for business¹².

It is interesting to note that the substitute of Bassanio in this adaptation is also named as Basanta Kumar like in the translated version *Surokata Nataka*. The name itself is suggestive of a foppish, romantic, luxurious, extravagant man with a refined taste who is as bright and beautiful as the Bengali season 'basanta' meaning spring. The name 'Pratibha' is symbolic because the Bengali connotation of the word suggests a creative, constructive genius with intelligence and presence of mind. The name is appropriately given to the female lead of the adapted play who will rescue the 'saudagar', Anil kumar from Kulrik through her presence of mind. The name Kulrik Sresthi is self explanatory as 'sresthi' refers to opulent, business class or merchants. Kulrik re-presents Shylock, the moneylender from the original play¹³. In this play though the word 'saudagar' refers to a merchant but the title does not talk about a particular merchant whose life would be sacrificed like Anil kumar but refers to the business class in general. Bandopadhyay however sticks to the original connotation of the title *The Merchant of Venice*. However, he has not focused on the romantic aspect of the play like in *Bhanumati*. The format of the play was based according to the Sanskrit dramatic pattern following the act divisions of 'anko' and 'gorvanko' and the content mostly adhered to the original version except for a few changes. The concept of 'syamvara' is also used in this adaptation like the previous adaptation but the exposition is changed totally. The play begins with a song sung by the wives of the merchants expressing their anguish and pair of separation from their voyager husbands. In Act 1, scene 1, they sing :

“Sejegujeminseygechesaudagoritey / deshbideshghurephirey ,/

Koto amdaniroptanikorey, / Takarbojhaanleyghare ,/

Tobey pabeyjirennitey./Sagarjalenayanjal misiyeydiye./

Suknomukheypranerdukheybhaslojahajniye;/Bene-bouthakashayjiye;/

Bhabchiekhonhaiprandhon! (keno) dilamchereymoritey.”

Bandopadhyay had tried to capture the local, regional flavor of the culture of the merchant's wives who prayed for their husband's safe arrival from their long journeys and apprehensively waited for them. In this adaptation there is ample use of songs. There are altogether thirteen songs, which, I believe was his intention of domesticating the play to reach to the common

masses. Indian, especially Bengali theatre, loved the use of music in the form of songs and dances that mostly played the role of chorus as in Greek dramas¹⁴. His inclusion of many minor characters like ‘Ahlade’ (a jester), wives of merchants, ‘nagariks’ (citizens), ‘mantris’ (counselors), jailors and a group of young boys was also done in keeping with the Sanskrit dramatic tradition where such characters were frequently used. The language used in this adaptation by Bhupendranath Bandopadhyay is simple Bengali dialect and incorporated many colloquial proverbs and idioms to reach the Bengali audience. Unlike Hurro Chandra Ghosh, who made a fusion of prosaic and poetic language, Bandopadhyay deviated from the classical, formal language. Shakespeare’s highly imaginative, allusive language is replaced with alliterative rhyming words and colloquial lyrical songs to create a ludicrous effect at times. Ahlade, the jester figure speaks of Mohanlal, a contender of the ‘syambara’ of Pratibha :

“Ekeysaontalpargona, tayeMuraripur – tayeroopeysaatponchshreekrishna – tayeramchagolbilasipantagandhango “ [Act1,sc.6]

Mohanlal’s dark complexion has been obnoxiously referred as “mouralamacherambal” which focuses the racial distinction and elitism regarding skin complexion existing in the age. In a conversation between Natabar (Kulrik’s servant) and Niranjan (Lorenzo), Natabar describes himself as :

“emondantalo, shantalo, gantalo, entelomanusta –nabonatabarhoye-paitrik ‘Natabor’ naamnyedanriyeachii, eseyamaybolley kina ‘narbar’” [Act 1,sc.5] This has created a ludicrous effect but nothing very appealing. Even Ahlade repeats a phrase “ turuksefhurukfhain” which is nonsensical. Certain colloquial Bengali proverbs have been used here like ‘Goborepadmaphool’, ‘Gacheynauthteiekkandi’, ‘Gacheykanthalgonpeytel’ to give a pitty, colloquial effect to the play. Mohanlal after selecting the gold casket speaks :

“RamRam e kirey baba? ektamorarmatha. DurgaDurga. Kothay Pratibhasundarirchegara, aarkothaiektadaantbarkoramarmatha. Durjhantamar, jhanta mar.” [Act1,sc.6]

These words are nowhere near the Prince of Morocco’s dialogue in the original play. In this adaptation, also Kulrik and Anil both hate each other for their professional differences of a moneylender and a merchant. The class conflict was unable to create the same repulsion, dislike and hatred as was created in Shylock. In the Shakespearean plot, the animosity between Christian and Jews was a strong cause for Shylock to demand a pound of flesh from Antonio in retaliation for the Christian inhumanity and religious

differences. But, I feel Mukhopadhyay wanted to focus more on the ludicrous and fairy tale element in the adapted version and so the animosity between Kulrik and Anil had been underplayed and the intensity reduced.

All the three writers acknowledged that it was very difficult for them to make a close translation and a good adaptation keeping the form and content of the play intact. They tried to appropriate the text keeping the local audience in mind. Hurro Chandra Ghosh and Pyarilal Mukhopadhyay tried to cater to the nineteenth century urban elites. So, they relocated the venue, hybridized the text and employed transculturation method to adapt the text to the Indian context. In the process, the original flavor of the text has been reduced. The adapted/translated texts have deliberately changed focus from mercantilism to romance perhaps to incorporate the spirit of the Sanskrit, romantic, dramatic tradition. Hence, the inclusion of song and dance sequences somewhere diluted the gravity of the play. Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is often categorized as a Romantic Comedy but the play also raises serious issues like racism which is missing in the adapted and translated versions. Even the experimentation with the language did not give the desired result. In *Bhanumati* the language was more formal, traditional, a blend of prosaic and poetic verses like :

Bhanumati: “Kenobabisonnomonhoycheamar
KahoSulochanasokhikoriyabichar.
Asaneyasonyaaarsoyoneyeswaponey
Sadaiasukhmonejanmileykemoney
Basoneybhushaneyjenodansitecheybicha
Sansarersukhamibujhitechimicha.
Sulochana : “Atayantooisorjeysukhnaithakurani
Kutireynahikosukhekathaomani.” [Act1,scene6]

The language in *Saudagar* after a span of forty three years was more casual and colloquial textual instances that have been given earlier but neither of them could match Shakespeare's romantic, imaginative and lyrical diction.

Notes :

1. The real founder of the Pratihara empire and the greatest ruler of the dynasty was Bhoja .He rebuilt the empire by 836 A.D., recovered Kanauj and annexed Malwa and some parts of Gujarat. Arab travelers tell us that the Pratihara rulers had the best cavalry, Import of horses from Central Asia and Arabia was an important item of India's trade at that time. The Pratiharas dominated north India for over a hundred years from 9th to the middle of the 10th century. Chandra, Satish. *A History of Medieval India* . Blackswan, 2007, 16-17.

Print.

2. Ibid.18
3. Kalidas . *Meghdootam* verses (27-38), refers to Ujjain. “ Ujjain used to lay on the main trade route between north India and Deccan going from Mathura via Ujjain to Mahismati(Maheswar) on the Narmada river and to Paithan on the river Godavari, western Asia and the West.” History of Ujjain. www.simhasthujain.in/ujjain.
4. The concept of theatre was Western and was imported from Britain and the first theatre was built in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1831 by Prasannakumar Tagore which was in imitation of the western picture frame stage and called it the ‘Hindu Theatre’ though plays were staged in English on that stage.
5. Kalidas. *Abhigyansakuntalam*.
6. Kalidas’ plays have romantic themes like in *Abhigyansakuntalam* which is the love story of Sakuntala and king Dusyanta; in *Meghdootam* it is the pining of the lonely Yaksha for his beloved.
7. Ratangarh region was also an important part of ancient culture. A 10th century ‘silalekh’ engraved with folk dance was found from an old temple, now placed in Bikaner government museum. Ratangarh was called ‘second Kashi’ due to it being a centre of learning. It became the seat of Sanskrit learning in Rajasthan. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratangarh>.
8. Historical reference to Gour: it was under the control of the Pala dynasty and Karnasuvarna was the capital of Sasankha, the administrative headquarter. It was founded in 9th century, abandoned in 16th century. It was a prosperous city. Its strategic location near the Indo Bangladesh border, along the banks of Ganges has earned a lot of significance. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Bengal.
9. Bipradas, Piplai, 15th century poet, contributor of *Manasamangal* gave vivid description of Saptagram on the banks of Hooghly river, while describing the journey of the merchant Chand Saudagar.
10. Bandopadhyay Rakhaldas, *BanglarItihas*. Nababharat Publishers, Kolkata. 1971. 66-67, 7. Print. He mentions that Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq built mosque in Saptagram during 1324-28 collecting materials from many Hindu and Buddhist temples.
11. Patree, Purnendu. *Purano Kolkatar Kathachitra* Dey’s Publishing 1979, 1995. 65-71. ISBN 81-7079-7579.
12. Bandopadhyay, Rakhaldas.p.81. He refers to traveller Ibn Battuta, who visited Satgaon in 1350 and recorded that traders from Arabia, Persia and Turkey came to Saptagram. Another reference of Portuguese traveler, Tom Pires in

his work *Suma Oriental* written during 1512-15 refers to Saptagram. He wrote, "It is a good city and rich where there were many merchants".

13. Chandragupta II had defeated the confederacy of Vanga kings resulting in Bengal becoming part of the Gupta empire. During Gupta rule the Bengal economy was part of a global trade network. The main social groups dominating in the socio-economic life were the Nagarsresthi (city representative of sethclassi.e bankers), Sarthabaha (merchant class) and Kulik (artisan class). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Bengal.
14. In Greek dramas the chorus played the role of a narrator often commenting on the actions of the characters or events.

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**Indian Responses to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*,
Endgame and *Happy Days* from 2006 to 2009**

Tapu Biswas

The Nobel laureate Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) is recognized as one of the most important and influential Absurdist writers of the twentieth century. His art has been re-imagined by various performers and translators of his writings in Indian languages. These interpreters have made his works heard in languages that Beckett himself did not speak and understand. The present study seeks to review/examine this question in the context of Indian languages.

It was in the mid-1950s, around Beckett's 50th birth anniversary, that the Indian literati, the Indian theatre professionals, made their first acquaintance with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Whereas in the West this complex play was being looked upon as 'Absurdist', written in the aftermath of the horrors of the second World War, the contemporary intellectuals in India possibly did not really see anything 'absurdist' in this play, though, following Western ideas, they had to label it as a play written in what was then being termed as a new genre of absurdist writings. The play appealed to the Indian intellectuals because it contained ideas quite in consonance with the Indian traditions inherited over the years. Though Vladimir and Estragon might have been continuing to wait for some mythical or mystical "Godot" to appear and solve all their problems, and the Western critics might have seen in it some absurdist theme inspired by the circumstances of the time, the Indian intellectuals (as distinct from those from other cultures) certainly were in a position to comprehend the whole issue as something natural and logical and not as absurdist. Here, it may be relevant to note the apt observation made by Martin Esslin in his *The Theatre of the Absurd*.

The avant-garde of the theatre today is, more likely than not, the main influence on the mass media of tomorrow. And the mass media, in turn, shape a great deal of the thought and feeling of

people throughout the Western ... Thus the type of theatre discussed [here] is by no means of concern only to a narrow circle of intellectuals. It may provide a new language, new ideas, new approaches, and a new, vitalized philosophy to transform the modes of thought and feeling of the public at large in a not too distant future . (15; emphases added)

Martin Esslin was quite prophetic. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* did indeed, in due course, provide 'a new language, new ideas, new approaches' to transform the modes of thought and feelings of the writers in India.

To make a humble beginning in this direction, to expand the horizons of our knowledge, an Indian researcher would quite obviously and naturally be inspired, and even tempted, to examine how, down the memory lane, a play by Beckett has been read, comprehended and re-imagined by writers/litterateurs/ translators in a language or languages considered less known to the literary world.

In India *Waiting for Godot* attracted the attention of the intellectuals, academicians and commoners alike by the time of Beckett's 50th birthday in 1956. A literary scholar in Calcutta (by common consent the cultural capital of India), Ashok Sen¹, took up this work for translation into Bengali. His translation into Bengali, bearing the same title as in English (that is, *Waiting for Godot*), was to be released apparently on the great writer's 50th birthday, though the exact date of this publication cannot be ascertained with certainty. Apart from being available in personal collection of various scholars of the time, a copy of this book is found preserved in the National Library of India in Calcutta. This first ever translation of *Waiting for Godot* in an Indian language has its historical, bibliographical importance. This Bengali version was staged on 23rd November 1957 in Calcutta by a theatre group "Bhobanipur Sandhaaneer Club", also known as 'Sandhyaneer', under the direction of Ashok Sen (the translator) himself . Ashok Sen, the translator, was a theatre enthusiast and had established the aforementioned theatre group in 1954. Sen was in fact the first theatre director in Bengal to direct both Brecht and Beckett. Here it may not be out of place to mention the names of two more theatre enthusiasts of the contemporary Calcutta Amarjit Singh and Chittaranjan Banerjee. They played respectively the roles of Estragon and Vladimir respectively in this Bengali version of *Waiting for Godot*. The roles of Pozzo, Lucky, the boy were performed by Ashok Sengupta, Sankar Chakroborty and Partha Pratim Chowdhury. This Bengali production had several repeat performances around that time and again in the 1970s. All

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these got due publicity in the reputed newspapers of the time like *The Statesman*, *The Hindustan Standard* in English and the *Saptahik Basumati* and the *Gharoa* (a rather less known paper) in Bengali. All these media reviews, positive and appreciative, both of the first ever translation and the first ever stage production of this important play in an Indian language form an integral part of the mid- 20th century documentation of translations and stage productions of plays belonging to falling in the category of the Western Theatre of the Absurd. An extensive documentation of all these media responses, a part of history of theatre in India, taken up as a research project leading to a University M.Phil degree and completed in the year 2002, is now available in a detailed systematic form in the book *Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot: Indian Interpretations through Critical and Analytical Studies, Translations and Stage Productions* (2006), written by the author of this article.

In the context of documentation of materials relating to translations and stage productions of the works of Samuel Beckett in Indian languages, Dr. Robert Emmet Meagher ² noted:

Godot has indeed lived and had quite a time in India across the last half century... Why, we might ask, would or should an Irish émigré playwright be so captivating for generations of Indian audiences? More specifically, why is the arguably unique Indian fascination with and response to *Waiting for Godot* of special significance well beyond South Asia? How is it that Indian soil is so well suited and hospitable to Beckett, so attuned to and resonant with the seemingly alien voices and silences of *Godot*? (i)

Professor Meagher further observes :

The truth is that India and Ireland are not nearly so remote as they appear from each other. Geography is not everything. During the same years when Beckett, or rather his work, was finding its way into India, a pioneering Irish scholar, Myles Dillon, was rediscovering and exploring the millennia-old linguistic and cultural root systems shared by ancient India and ancient Ireland. Since that time, Dillon's bold and provocative conjectures and theories have been supported and confirmed by another generation of scholars, east and west, arguing that indeed the connections and conversations between India and Ireland are close and compelling and very ancient. The recognizable kinship between some of what it means to be Indian and some of what it means to

be Irish is not just a matter of their common humanity, not merely another instance of the classical realization of the Roman playwright Terence that: *Homo sum: humane nil a me alienum puto* (“I’m a human being. When I think about it, nothing is really foreign to me.”). Beyond the universal consortium of human kinship, the fact seems to be— put most simply—that “Celts and Aryans are cousins. (i- ii)

Professor Emi Hamana of the Tsukuba University, Japan, also observes, “The most vital reason for the Indian reception of plays written by Beckett... is that Indian people see them as reflecting their reality as contemporary plays,” (i) observes

The documentation of materials relating to Beckett in India, consciously undertaken by the author of this article, mentions translations of *Waiting for Godot* into Indian languages published in India upto the year 1999. The purpose of the present article, a tribute to Samuel Beckett, is not to repeat the same pieces of information but to update it by (a) identifying the gaps that is, finding out what was known but could not be incorporated in the volume already published, and (b) revisiting and reviewing the position after the year 1999. For instance, in the year 2000 *Waiting for Godot* was, interestingly enough, translated into Rajasthani language by Chandra Prakash Deval³, under the title *Godoo Ree Udeek Main* and published by the Sahitya Akademi [Indian Academy of *Belles Letters*], New Delhi, in arrangement with Editions De Minuit, France, the holders of the copyright of Samuel Beckett’s writings. This translation would greatly help the members of the vast Marwari community (largely a trading community) accessing Samuel Beckett’s plays. Information on this Rajasthani language translation of *Waiting for Godot* somehow could not be incorporated in the volume already published.

In 2006, on the birth centenary of Samuel Beckett, another Bengali translation was published from India (after a gap of around 50 years from the first Bengali translation by Ashok Sen). This time it was not published from Calcutta but from Medinipur. It was published by Dove Publishing House. The translation bearing the title *Godoo Janya Apeksha* was done by Bibhas Chand, who made a name for himself by translating into Bengali selected English poems of famous English poets, also reproducing their original English versions alongside the translation. In the preface to his translation of Beckett’s play he iterates the well- known French quotation: “If you want the translation to be authentic it would not be excellent, but if you want it to be excellent it would not be authentic.” The translator observes

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that he is not sure how authentic or how excellent his translation is but he has spared no efforts.

Another important translation of *Waiting for Godot* done into Marathi (which did not find place in the already published volume referred to above) needs to be mentioned here. It may not be out of place to recollect here that during the Indian national freedom struggle the Marathi progressive society laid emphasis on the wide use of Marathi language in all spheres of life to inculcate love and regard for their own culture in the minds of the people. This translation into Marathi has been ably done from the French version by Madhavi Purandare, a Marathi writer and artist of international fame. Her Marathi version of *Waiting for Godot* was first staged at Nasik, on 6 March 1994, by a well-known theatre group 'Prayog Parivar', under the direction of the theatre actor and director Atul Pethe. This was done under overall guidance of the famous actor-director Naseeruddin Shah. This play was also performed at NCPA Experimental Theatre, Mumbai on 24th, 25th and 3rd, 4th July 1996. The actors in the main roles were:

Atul Pethe - Vladimir; Mangesh Bhide - Estragon; Rahul Dabir- Pozzo;
Tushal Kulkarni – Lucky; Suhas Parve – boy

Within a year, in 1995, the script which had been used for the production of the play was published from Pune by Rajhans Prakashan, with the cover page designed by the translator herself. In her preface the translator observed:

Attempts were made a few years back to stage *Waiting for Godot* in Marathi, but the eminent actor Naseeruddin Shah felt that the version to be staged should be a translation from the original script [viz. from French]. This inspired me to translate it [from French]. While translating, I have not thought about it simply as a literary work. [I have been all along conscious that] the words I was writing were to be used by the artists, and they should be able to feel them and then convey the feelings to the audience. I have tried to be faithful to the original text, original style and sense. I cannot say how academic and appropriate my translation is, but the artists-actors have expressed their satisfaction.(i)

Inspired by this excellent Marathi version, a reputed illustrator of 'theatre', Trupti Rajendra Chavan, also a graduate of J. J. Institute of Applied Art, Mumbai, who studied 'art direction and production design' at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, made impressive illustrations of characters of *Waiting for Godot*. She states:

I saw *Waiting for Godot*, a Marathi play translated by Madhuri Purandare and directed by Atul Pethe. My illustrations for this play are more simplified. I liked the frames, compositions in it. I tried to catch expressions of characters Vladimir, Estragon and Pozzo.⁷

In October 2006, in an article “Marathi Theatre”, a columnist Dibyajyoti Sarma observed:

Atul Pethe, who has been acting and directing the Marathi version of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (translated from original French by Madhuri Purandare), feels that there is a strong influence of absurdity and existentialism in Marathi theatre. ‘The core of absurdity is nothingness; and this sense of nothingness is universal,’ argues Pethe...

Pethe began his journey with *Godot* in 1994 and these 12 years have been a very fulfilling journey for him. Pethe recounts how the first performance of the play was a phenomenal success. Naseeruddin Shah wrote a review in a Bombay magazine calling it probably the most closer to home adaptation of the play. Incidentally, the current performance will also see the release of a DVD of the play by Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah...

And Pethe believes, like French wine, the play is getting more contemporary by the day, because ‘today’s audience is more culturally and literary minded than those 10 years ago. They can relate to an absurd theme better.’

And this is not an absurd idea at all. (Writeriot.blogspot.in/2006/10/Marathi-theatre.html.)

On 29th, 30th August 1995, 29th, 30th 31st July 1995 and 1st & 2nd August 1995 *Waiting for Godot* was performed in English under the direction of Benjamin Gilani at NCPA, Mumbai theatre Hall. The other casts were Naseeruddin Shah, Karim Vakil, Kennath Desai, Shiv Subramaniyay and Imuddin Shah.

In May 2006 a workshop on Absurd Theatre was conducted by the Shoestring Theatre, Bombay. It was then preparing for a performance of some plays of Samuel Beckett, particularly *Endgame*. The workshop *inter alia* attempted to provide a glimpse into the preparation that the dramatist personae and the director had to go through for staging Beckett’s plays. In an article published in the *Asian Age*, the journalist and the theatre critic, Ahalya Naidu, observed that for the organizers of the workshop it was not

important whether the Workshop would be a success or a failure; what was most significant for them was that the participants should comprehend the meaning of 'absurd theatre'. It had come to be realized that underlying the play of this trend was the meaninglessness of human life and that no adequate and appropriate language was available to express this meaninglessness, this feeling of the futility and absurdity of human existence. The participants of the Workshop were clearly given to understand that in such plays the dialogues, if any, were always secondary to the action; and as such the significance of silence in these plays should not and could not be underestimated. In this connection, Jenn Calvano explains:

The actor has to be physically agile which explains the exercises in the Workshop. For instance, the participants have to form letters from the alphabet with their body, four participants form a machine, while the workshop organisers 'throw a spanner in their works by tripping up'. An intersecting exercise involves two people facing each other and becoming the mirror and the reflection with no discussion beforehand as to who will play what... This theatre [of the Absurd] is more physical than textual. We urge the actors to look at the space around them, and although we lay down rules about the scene we will be playing, we remind them to cheat, to break the rules because if they didn't, we would be disappointed.(3)

In 2009 the Seagull Arts and Media Resource Centre, Calcutta, organized a festival of films based on the plays of Samuel Beckett from 25th July to 1st August 2009. Talking of this Festival the *Telegraph* noted in an article published in its 25th July edition that "Samuel Beckett is considered one among the last modernists and one of the key writers of the theatre of the absurd. The entire literary output of this Irish born playwright and novelist offers a bleak outlook on human culture, reducing basic existential problems to their most essential features."

A Hindi newspaper of the time also paid a befitting tribute to the great writer on his birth centenary by publishing an interesting article under the title *Uljalool Ke bhi arth hain* [literally: "Absurd also has a meaning"] along with an illustration of a scene from *Waiting for Godot*. This article, apart from being a tribute to the writer, stressed that the young Hindi writers should understand that revolutionary developments do not take place just for nothing, just by putting up a theatrical performance before 20-25 people. There is no short cut in this field; the only way is to produce works which may be able to establish themselves in the history of dramaturgy.

An article published in the New Delhi edition of the *Pioneer* observed that Indian theatre is undergoing a slow revolution and it was evident from the staging of SB'S play in the capital. This stage performance was different from the regular staging of the play in that a significant portion of it was presented through video clippings, complete with sound elements. The article further states: "The definition of theatre is changing now that people are willing to experiment and explore newer boundaries in performing art."

Other performances of *Waiting for Godot* deserving mention here are those by a drama group 'POESIS' formed by the scholars of the Department of English and Other European Languages (DEOMEL), Visva-Bharati. These were held at different venues on different dates between 2012 and 2014. The first one was held on 5th Sept 2007 on the occasion of Teachers Day at the DEOMEL seminar hall at Visva-Bharati. The second performance was held on 11 September 2013 at the M U C Womens College, Burdwan with a repeat performance on 13th November 2013 at the Habra Sri Chaitnya College and 4th show was on 17th January 2017 at Santiniketan Poesis Theatre Festival. The detailed performance of *Waiting for Godot* by the theatre group "Santiniketan Poesis," was directed by Sukla Basu Sen.

The roles of Vladimir and Estragon were played by Somjit Halder and Aritra Choudhury. The direction was provided by Professor Sukla Basu Sen. The wait for Godot is continuing.

On 18 November 2013 Satyabrata Rout wanted to ascertain whether 'Godot had arrived' (*Godot aaya kya?*) and wrote:

This Hindi version of *Waiting for Godot* redefines the significance of human existence and tries to search for a deeper meaning of life. Our production gives emphasis on the hidden layers of human relationship and tries to search for a Godot who is nowhere but within our own self. The adaptation focuses on the Indian mindset, for which lot of modifications are done with the characters & in the storyline.¹

1. <http://satyabratarout.blogspot.com/2013/11/godot-aaya-kya-hindi-adaptation-of.html>

It would be of interest to mention here that in December 2009 when as a part of a festival of Beckett's plays his play *Happy Days* (following the staging of *Waiting for Godot*) was all set to open curtains at Bangalore (the hub of Indian information industry), the freelance journalist and critic Priyadarshini Nandy, in an interview to the *Daily News & Analysis* of 7 December [2009] interestingly observed: "Samuel Beckett would have been one happy guy if he knew the way Bangalore was lapping up his plays..."



(*Waiting for Godot*, directed by Satyabrata Rout, Produced by Rangakalpa Hyderabad, India)

This was a US production of Beckett's *Happy Days* (brought to Bangalore by the theatre group, "Ligra"), starring Miss Patty Gallagher in the role of Winnie, associate professor of Theatre Arts, University of California and actor Joe McGrath. These US actors and actresses reflected the distinctiveness of the staging of this play in India by a very thought-provoking comment that "the meaning of any theatre is a negotiation between the playwright, actors and the audience and who knows what the Ranga Shankara audience will teach us?" Miss Patty Gallagher further stressed that "Beckett is and will remain relevant to contemporary audiences in that he asks the most basic questions about the human condition".

The aim and purpose of the present study is to fill the lacuna, that is, to comprehensively collect, collate and critically examine all widely scattered information on this subject. I have tried to do a critical bibliographical survey of various translations and adaptations of the play in Bengali and in Marati languages, supplemented with views and reviews thereon by critics. Further I have tried to do a descriptive analytical documentation of performance of *Waiting for Godot* in various states of India with survey of views and reviews thereof by media, theatre personalities, critics etc. Hope this will help future researcher on Beckett.

Some scenes performed by “POESIS” theatre group:



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Notes:

1. Ashok Sen was a resident of 30, Gobinda Ghoshal Lane. His other productions under the aegis of his theatre group “Bhobanipur Sandhaaneer Club” included Ibsen’s *Doll’s House*, Rabindranath Tagore’s *Rakta Karabi* (*Red Oleanders*), and Anton Chekhov’s *Cherry Orchard*.
2. Dr. Robert Emmet Meagher is Professor of Humanities, Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA.
3. Mr. Deval is a famous Rajasthani poet and translator. He is also a member of the Advisory Committee of the Rajasthan State Sahitya Akademi. He has made significant translations into Rajasthani from such varied languages as Bengali, Odiya, Hindi, Punjabi and Gujarati. Apart from Samuel Beckett’s work he has also translated the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novel *Crime and Punishment*. For his literary work in Rajasthani language he has been honoured with the prestigious Padmashri award by the President of India in 2011. He is also Sahitya Akademi Prize winner for his collection of poems published under the title *Paagi*.
4. Mr. Chand has also translated into Bengali G.B. Shaw’s three-act play *Major Barbara*.
5. Madhavi Purandare is a Marathi writer and artist of international fame. A product of the highly prestigious Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay, she studied painting and graphic arts in Paris. Well versed in French, she has been teaching French at the Alliance Française for over 18 years. It will not be

out of place to note here that she is the daughter of Babasaheb Purandare, the reputed historian, litterateur and theatre personality.

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“The temperature out there was -17⁰ ; Shukhov’s temperature was+99⁰ . The fight was on.” – Crime and punishment in Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

Anurima Paul

The Nobel Laureate Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008) was hailed by the former Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev as “our contemporary Tolstoy”. Born a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, Solzhenitsyn served the Soviet Army with distinction during World War II as a commander of an artillery battery. He was twice decorated and was also awarded the Order of the Red Star in 1944 for destroying two German artillery batteries. However, this dutiful citizen was arrested on charges of anti-Soviet propaganda under the infamous Article 58 based on his critical comments regarding the contemporary Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in a personal letter to a friend. He led a life of drudgery for eight years in a labour camp and was then exiled for life at Birlik, a village in Kazakhstan. But after Khrushchev’s Secret Speech in 1956 made at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union denouncing Stalin’s despotic rule and the purges he carried out, Solzhenitsyn was freed and rehabilitated after spending three years in exile. Out of his ghastly experiences at the Gulag, came out classics of Russian literature like *Cancer Ward* (1966), *In the First Circle* (1968) and *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973). His terrible experiences at the prison camp at Ekibastuz in Kazakhstan where he had to toil as a miner, bricklayer and foundry foreman form the foundation for his first novel, a work that completely unsettled the USSR- *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962).

Solzhenitsyn employs the form of a diary or testimony to squeeze into a single day the hardships of a prisoner’s entire life in the Gulag. The form in English dates back a long way from the Restoration master diarist Samuel Pepys, his contemporary John Evelyn to the present day. The *Letters* (1798-1824) of Lord Byron are considered to be one of the three great

autobiographies alongside Pepys' Diary (1660-1669) and James Boswell's detailed and candid Journals (1762-1795). Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Notebooks (1794-1834) bring the readers closer to the Romantic poet and is regarded as a prose masterpiece. The Private Diaries of Stendhal (1801-1817) provides an excellent account of contemporary France, Italy and Russia, and Stendhal's other testimonials like *The Life of Henry Brulard* (1890) and *Memoirs of an Egotist* (1892) sketch his life and philosophy. Flaubert's *Memoirs of a Madman* (1901) display a bleak outlook of life. The 1445-page long *A Writer's Diary* (1873-1881) is considered Fyodor Dostoevsky's boldest experiment in literary form. Tolstoy's *Diaries* (1895-1910) represents the great Russian writer's flaws as he engages in self-criticism. The distinguished French-American diarist Anais Nin opines on the collective quality of diary-writing saying, "When we go deep into the personal, we go beyond the personal. We achieve something that is collective." (The New York Times Archive), and this aspect is noted in the works of Solzhenitsyn himself. Lastly, the 15-year old victim of Holocaust Anne Frank who died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany under Hitler's regime wrote her memorable *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947) while in hiding. The diary is a chronicle of the Nazi subjugation from the perspective of a teenage girl and is presented in a rich and evocative manner.

Solzhenitsyn presents the events of a single day in the life of the titular character Ivan Denisovich Shukhov from reveille to recess. Shukhov is serving a ten-year prison term at a Gulag camp. His official crime is the treasonable action of aiding the Germans on a mission. But ironically he was a German prisoner of war and was escaping from captivity when he was caught. He had to assent to the official version of his offence, otherwise he would have been shot. Most of Shukhov's co-sufferers have been arrested for no reason—Tiurin simply for being a kulak's son, Tsezar for attempting to make a film, the young Gopchik for carrying milk to General Bendera's army, and Senka was a tortured German prisoner of war on the escape like Shukhov. Thus it becomes a case of subverted Gramscian hegemony as here there is both coercion and consent, rather than domination chiefly through consent than coercion. Such was the condition of the Stalinist reign of terror in which an obedient compatriot could be stripped of all his dignity and basic human rights of speech and movement, and imprisoned in absolutely inhospitable environment. Stalin supported communism but his own version of it was state totalitarianism. This undemocratic dystopia determined by total government control and subjugation of people can be termed "Orwellian", a

derivation from the name of the British author George Orwell whose Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) projects a terrifying vision of a totalitarian future in which everyone and everything is subjected to an autocratic regime. In both the grim worlds of Orwell and Solzhenitsyn, the Big Brother is always watching every little move and is creating false ideologies like-

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

(Nineteen Eighty-Four, 18)

Ivan Denisovich Shukhov is incarcerated for a non-existent reason. He had to plead guilty to a crime he had not committed. This illogical state of affairs recalls the absurdist situation in Kafka's *The Trial* which begins with, "Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong, but one morning, he was arrested." The condition of Shukhov and the prisoners (known as 'zeks') constitutes both physical and existential crises. They have to live in extremely hostile habitat where only the fittest can survive. In the prison camp, the wake-up call is sounded at five o'clock. A meagre breakfast is provided comprising bread and a light soup made either of carrots, or of black cabbages, rarely of oats, and sometimes even of nettles, with a few putrid fishbones thrown in it. Then the guards would lead them to work only after a headcount and full-body search of the zeks. The counting has to be meticulously performed because if a single prisoner is found missing, the lost head will have to be replaced by the guard's own. The unfortunate zeks work for eleven hours or more in the harsh snowy climate and at the end of another round of count and recount, they are given their desired dinner. Solzhenitsyn describes it with vivid poignancy as he writes, "It was at the evening recount on their return through the gates that the prisoners, freezing and famished, found the icy wind hardest to bear. A bowl of thin cabbage soup, half burned, was as welcome to them as rain to parched earth. They'd swallowed it in one gulp. That bowl of soup- it was dearer than freedom, dearer than life itself, past, present and future." (*One Day*, 105). They would be enumerated once again, and if it does not tally with the record, they would be woken up from sleep and counted again. Thus they are reduced to the position of a flock of sheep. Their dehumanisation is projected through their severely routinised existence- "No zek ever saw a clock or a watch. What use were they to him anyway? All he

needs to know is: will reveille sound soon? How long to roll call? How long to dinner? To the last clanging of the rail?" (One Day, 131). The "morning prayer" recited to the prisoners reinforces the strict schedule- "Attention, prisoners. Marching orders must be strictly obeyed. Keep to your ranks. No hurrying, keep a steady pace. No talking. Keep your eyes fixed ahead and your hands behind your backs. A step to right or left is considered an attempt to escape and the escort has orders to shoot without warning." (One Day, 31). To rein them in, bright incandescence from powerful searchlights, border lights and camp lights flood the tenements, the luminosity of which outshines the stars.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich authentically depicts the grinding hard labour of the prisoners, the freezing cold weather, the brutality of the guards and corruption of the camp administration. In the site named the "Socialist Way of Life" settlement, work has to be done on the open snow, the foremost job being to dig holes, put up posts and fasten barbed wire around them. The reason is pathetic- "Wire themselves in, so that they wouldn't run away." (One Day, 5). Zero degree temperature denotes a warmer climate and work can only be ceased if the temperature drops down to -41p . The unforgiving cold has a paralysing effect on the prisoners- "Shukhov's fingers were numb with cold under his worn mittens. He'd lost all sense of touch." (One Day, 47). The effect of this icy atmosphere is also described by Varlam Shalamov who endured seventeen years of Gulag labour and who, according to Solzhenitsyn, touched the bottom of brutalisation and despair to which the whole camp life dragged them into. About a hapless prisoner he writes in the short story "Duck" which is a part of his celebrated *Kolyma Tales*, "His frozen, ice-scratched fingers tried to warm themselves against his breast- trembling from the aching pain of incurable frostbite, the man tucked his hands, both of them, under his shirt. There was little warmth in his hungry body, and the man returned to the barrack, pushed his way through to the stove and still couldn't get warm. His body was shaking, shuddering unstopably." (Shalamov, 330). Instances of fiendish guards found in Shalamov's famous short story "Berries" appear mercilessly in Solzhenitsyn's novel as well who are ready to execute a prisoner committing the minutest mistake. Shukhov's fellow inmate Buinovsky protests against the senseless regulation of wearing nothing but an undershirt underneath the uniform, and against the inhuman practice of disrobing the prisoners in the overwhelming cold to check their compliance with the rule. What the ex-Navy commander promptly gets as punishment for this is ten days in the guardhouse. The

prisoners had been made to build this torturous cell to discipline and punish themselves. It is an infernal cell consisting of brick walls, cement floor and no windows. A stove is fit only to melt the ice on the walls thereby creating puddles on the floor. One has to sleep on bare boards and thrive on nine ounces of bread a day and hot soup once every three days. The health is irrevocably ruined and those who are condemned to spend fifteen days there, “they went straight into a hole in the cold earth” (One Day, 129).

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich is the book that illuminated the secret and dark Gulag life through intense, bold and horrifyingly real portrayal of the annihilation camps during Stalin’s regime. Solzhenitsyn does not employ elaborate and embellished language, he brings out the predicament of the prisoners through unadorned prose. He makes his unjustly condemned protagonist not heroic but resourceful- “Shukhov knew how to manage anything.” (One Day, 12). Shukhov’s insistence, “I’ll keep going” (One Day, 87) equates him to a Beckettian hero who says, “I can’t go on, I’ll go on.” (The Unnamable, 407). His awe-inspiring resilience is reminiscent of Hemingway’s Santiago who declares, “A man can be destroyed but not defeated.” (The Old Man and the Sea, 121). A highly skilled workman, Shukhov does not have time to indulge himself in the literature and politics of the outer world but is only concerned with getting on in his prison camp. He is not Dostoevsky’s philosophical prisoner Raskolnikov, but a fortuitous and practical one who swears by Stephen Dedalus’ mantra of “silence, exile and cunning” (A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 208). Katherine Hunter Blair aptly summarises the scope of the novel and the majestic quality of Shukhov as she remarks, “There is nothing here of the clichés of officialdom about the Soviet worker being a worker at heart whatever the circumstances... [it] has deeper implications than the obvious one that in those conditions any activity was a therapeutic release. It is a revelation of man, stripped of everything including hope, who, in the absurdly limited and unrewarding work that is left to him becomes so great that one wants to bow down before his dignity and his suffering.” (Review, 168). The novel thus becomes a caustic indictment of communist authoritarianism, and also an eloquent assertion of the victory of the human spirit.

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Troubled Subjectivities: Artists in A. S. Byatt's *Possession*

Premanjana Banerjee

A. S. Byatt's novels are about artists or about characters desiring to be artists. She describes male and female characters who long for artistic genius because the possession of genius promises transcendence from the limitations of gender and from the dullness of reality. In her critical works, Byatt makes use of Virginia Woolf's theory of the writer as androgynous in order to express her conviction that gender is of no relevance in writing. She criticizes the lack of women's access to artistic subjectivity in her reworking of the myths of the Lady of Shalott and Melusine. She writes that her novel *The Shadow of the Sun* (1964) poses the question of "what happens when a young female deploys theories of art, vision, and creative identity as a medium for her anxieties about gender and generation" (Franken 9). In the world of Byatt subjectivity and creativity are closely linked, and their interactions are presented through a metafictional form. Byatt's quartet *The Virgin in the Garden* illuminates the inevitable conflicts between domesticity and ambition, confinement and self-fulfillment, in an incisive observation of intellectual and cultural life in England during the 1950s. Her novella, *The Conjugal Angel*, too goes back in history, and is reminiscent of *Possession*, as it deals with Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. History in *Possession* combines with ideas of creativity and metafiction to depict an even more complex vision of subjectivity. A. S. Byatt's text illustrates how successfully she accomplished an erasure of the authorial presence. As a writer, she regarded fiction as the imagination of other worlds and several centres of consciousness, and hence once even famously defined her subjective position in terms of an erasure: "Literature has always been my way out, my escape from the limits of being female." (Franken 2). Byatt in *Possession* claims that identity depends on a relationship established between self and other which again is situated at the very 'centre of personal experience'. (Sexton 620). Subjectivity in the text is displayed not only through interplay of two different ages or periods but also through the intermixture of diverse different genres.

Her novel *Possession* for instance tells two parallel stories: that of a love affair between two Victorian poets, the first modeled on Robert Browning and given the name Randolph Henry Ash and the second named Christabel LaMotte, a character based on Christina Rossetti. But the novel also narrates the discovery of a love affair between the two Victorian poets by two modern literary critics, Roland Mitchell and Maud Bailey respectively, who in a sense re-live the lives and passions of the two late 19th century poets they specialize in as academic researchers, and who fall in love themselves. The parallel stories in the novel speak to each other, creating meaning through their connections and their disconnections. Byatt attempts to simultaneously emulate and rewrite Victorian literature and real Victorian figures, with the invented careers and writing of Ash and LaMotte, depicting both Victorian and modern personalities, fiction and ideas.

It is the argument of this paper that *Possession* is essentially about subjectivity as a liminal existence, the experience of being caught between two time periods, two lives, and two worlds. This theme of liminality exists at a metaphorical level throughout the novel, as the narrator plays with constant attempts to uncover or reawaken the dead. This theme, apart from figuring in Christabel's routine séances, is also expressed in Ash's imaginative attempt at "bringing to life, restoring in some sense to vitality, the whole vanished men of other times ..." (158). Byatt however places a moral forewarning on this perilous desire to intrude into the past. Embodying the natural world as a place of symbolic premonitions and ghostly terror elsewhere in the text, the final chapter of the novel reveals the impossibility of a complete knowledge of, or return to, the past. It is important to note however that the quest for truth, the search for a source of knowledge – are the elements of the traditional *bildungsroman*, and that *Possession* does fulfill this promise of Victorian romantic and personal development to a certain degree. But Byatt's postmodern fiction in fact challenges this coherent structure of knowledge that is sought by Maud and Roland. The chapter entitled "Postscript 1868" at the novel's end explores this idea:

There are things that happen and leave no discernible trace, are not spoken or written of, though it would be very wrong to say that subsequent events go indifferently, all the same, as though such things had never been. Two people met, on a hot May Day, and never later mentioned their meeting. This is how it was. (508)

Thus, all that which drives Maud and Roland as well as the entire academic structure of the university — the belief that with the proper investigating

techniques and dogged determination all signs and traces of the past may be unearthed and analyzed — is revealed to be a false assumption. By inserting a third person omniscient narrator at specific points within the novel, Byatt promotes the idea that neither can the true events of the past ever be fully understood, nor can their consequences be fully measured. The very last words of *Possession* cement this concept of the known and the unknown, as the events of that “hot May day” rest only within the minds of Randolph Henry Ash and his daughter Maia.

This same ambiguity is perceived in the subjective positions of the characters too, not only because of the inherent contradictions through which they are revealed, but also because of their uncertain ends. While Christabel self-admittedly writes her end in the myth of Melusina, the morning after the consummation of the relationship between Roland Mitchell and Maud Bailey too is described in mythical terms. The words “it was the smell of death and destruction and it smelled fresh and lively and hopeful” (507) indicate, like May in her cornfield, the advent of spring and the starting and ending of Byatt’s cycle – the reversion to innocence after the fall. Moreover the future of the relationship between Roland and Maud remains undetermined with respect to Roland’s new job offers. Even when Roland is faced with the hope of a unified self in Romance he notes that he had been trained to see his “self as an illusion, to be replaced by a discontinuous machinery and electrical message-network of various desires, ideological beliefs and responses, language-forms and hormones and pheromones. On the whole, he liked this, for he had no desire for any strenuous Romantic self-assertion.(424)

This has a somewhat similar amplitude in the writer-in-the-past Randolph Henry Ash’s own notion that subjectivity as a product of history expresses both a multiplicity and an uncertainty:

A man is the history of his breaths and thoughts, acts, atoms and wounds, love, indifference and dislike; also of his race and nation, the soil that fed him and his forbears, the stones and sands of his familiar places, long-silenced battles and struggles of conscience, of the smiles of girls and the slow utterance of old women, of accidents and the gradual action of inexorable law, of all this and something else too, a single flame which in every way obeys the laws that pertain to fire itself, and yet is lit and put out from one moment to the next, and can never be relumed in the whole waste of time to come.(9)

Yet, subjectivity in *Possession* is displayed not only through interplay of two different ages or periods but also through the intermixture of diverse different genres. Byatt says in one of her interviews that:

I half-knew that the form of my novel should be a parody of every possible form, popular and “high culture”... so my novel should be a parody, not of Sherlock Holmes, but of the Margery Allingham detective stories I grew up on. It should learn from my childhood obsession, Georgette Heyer, to be a Romance, and it could learn, simultaneously from Hawthorne, Henry James’s predecessor, that a historical Romance is not realist, and desires to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us. I added things – it should be an epistolary novel, which meant writing the letters the scholars should find, it should contain early narrative forms — Victorian women writers wrote fairy tales— and late ones — bits of biographies and critical “accounts” of what was going on. (Burgass 27)

The problematization of subjectivity is also evident in a key sentence in the novel at the point when the modern textual scholars Maud and Roland spontaneously decide to recreate Ash and LaMotte’s trip to Yorkshire. The two literally “follow the path’ of the Victorian poets, retracing Ash and LaMotte’s trip initially quite intentionally, but when they happen to visit a place called Boggle Hole unintentionally, they continue along the trail of clues that suggests an affair between the poets, moving closer to a perception of romance as overwhelming as that between Ash and LaMotte, and involving the reader too in the metafictional quest: “I want to – to — follow the — path. I feel taken over by this. I want to know what happened, and I want it to be me that find out” (238). This effectively underscores that the two resort to both the romance and the detective mode of writing to re-write themselves.

Using tropes from the detective novel and romance, Byatt thus enunciates how art becomes a means for writing out one’s self. The written word takes centre stage throughout *Possession*, as both Roland and Maud share a devotion to poetry and letters, which leads them on the path to their great discovery. Love letters, poems, journal entries, and other written forms further the story. The novel in fact plays out in its pages the idea of an establishment of subjectivity through a subject’s knowledge of art.

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Manufacturing History: Re-Reading Late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Australian History Text Books

Swati Roy Chowdhury

The purpose of the proposed paper is to attempt a re-reading of the history books written on Australian history during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from a post-colonial perspective. Written by either a white navigator to the unknown terrain called Australia or compiled from extracts of such memoirs these history books mostly offered personal opinions about events and incidents. This paper will try to negotiate the politics of such writing by questioning the fictionality of history.

For the purpose of this paper I have selected three such history books, namely *The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888* by Ernest Favenc (1888), *The History Of Australia And New Zealand From 1606 To 1890* by Alexander and George Sutherland (1894), and *A Source Book of Australian History* by Gwendolen Swinburne (1919)

The present papersums up my observations after reading a few text books on Australian history and interprets them in a way that is different from the intended surface meanings that the texts usually offer. While doing so I have tried to negotiate with the fictional elements in these books which are-paradoxically- meant to reproduce unbiased vision of truth.

When Jonathan Culler says:

...history manifests itself in narrative constructs, stories designed to yield meaning through narrative ordering. (Culler 1989: 129)

He is referring to the constructed nature of historiography which is, then, marked by what he calls, 'the historicity of articulations' implying that history is ultimately a constructed /manufactured account of events. Indeed one cannot deny the importance of 'articulation' in determining history as it comes down to later generations. Such writings cannot ever be impartial since they

are almost always written by people with particularity of convictions and allegiance. Even the most authentic historic text is tinted by the knowledge and perception of its writer and is, therefore, to some extent a reflection of his/ her personal beliefs, however detached s/he might seem. Unfortunately historical knowledge can only be attained through texts which, as has been already mentioned, are mostly unreliable. Therefore, the question that arises pertinently is what is the way of approaching the truth of historical events? Though there is no definite way of achieving that some workable methods would be to re-read the texts to find out the inexplicable gaps and fissures that might re tell a different story; or else one can re-read the texts in comparison with the alternative versions of the same events and such dialectical reading might emerge useful in obtaining a new interpretation of history. Now this is not something novel in the domain of historiography. But the novelty of this paper lies in applying these old paradigms to find out how far the books on Australian history written in the last decades of the 19th century and early years of the 20th century can be thus re-read as fictional constructs.

Three books have been used as primary texts for this paper, namely *The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888* by Ernest Favenc (1888), *The History Of Australia And New Zealand From 1606 To 1890* by Alexander and George Sutherland (1894), and *A Source Book of Australian History* by Gwendolen Swinburne (1919). The choice is arbitrated by the easy availability of the texts and the lucidity of articulation. In fact these books were meant to be primary texts in historical reading for the Australian school children. For a foreign novice entering into the domain of Australian history these books generate an anticipation that they would serve adequately to offer a glimpse of Australian history, but to one's utter surprise s/he could actually find that the texts were hiding more than what they revealed. But at the same time, thankfully, closer readings of the said texts exposed aporias which could facilitate possible re-interpretations.

One fictional construct in the given History books is the notion that Australian history began as the adventure saga of the White men in a rugged, rough landscape. All the books in question present Australian history as if it began with the White expeditions. A good explanatory passage might be given from Sutherland's book:

Australian history practically begins with the arrival of the white man, for before that time, though tribe fought with tribe and there

were many doings of savage men, there is nothing that could be told as a general story. (n.pag.)

While the titles of the first two books strategically exclude pre-exploration era by mentioning a particular time span, a closer scrutiny of the texts reveal that this has been done in a way as to negate the life prior to such expeditions as insignificant. The title of the third book i.e. by Swinburne still more blatantly refers to the white racist exclusionary policy by indicating a holistic approach towards recording Australian history and yet beginning with the same era of exploration as its domain. Swinburne's book, which is a compendium of excerpts from diaries and memoirs of various explorers and historians, begins with the account of Abel Tasman. What is even more interesting is the plan of this book. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is called "Discovery and Exploration" and the second is called "General History". This particular nomenclature re-endorses the popular and popularized notion that history of Australia is equal to and synonymous with history of White Australia. But it is a rather deliberately misrepresented story of the beginning of Australian history itself. That the truth is not exactly so can be well deciphered from the numerous references to the aborigines documented in the writings of the historians and explorers alike. Even in the texts in question we have mentions of the presence of the aborigines in the Southern continent prior to the arrival of the explorers. If we re-read Sutherland's comment already mentioned the gap between what is and what has been told becomes all the more evident. By using the word 'practically' Sutherland betrays the hidden actuality. This is further elaborated in the later lines where he acknowledges the 'doings' of the aborigines and yet it is his [or for that matter the white men in general] inability to construct a story out of the aborigines' lives that render the later 'historyless'.

The most significant exclusion from these books is, therefore, that of the Aborigines. When I say Aborigines are excluded I mean to say in spite of several references to them in the history books none of them cared to offer a glimpse into Aboriginal lives with all their social and cultural differences. Much in conformity with the colonialist policy of assertion of supremacy of the colonial culture, in all the references to the aboriginal population they are viewed as a homogenized bunch of uncivilized people hostile to the white people at worst and inferior companions to their adventurous expeditions at best. In Sutherland's book he makes a point to address this lack:

They made no surveys such as would have enabled them to draw correct charts of the coasts; they seldom landed, and even when they did, they never sought to become acquainted with the natives, or to learn anything as to the nature of the interior of the country. (n.pag.)

However, Sutherland himself also does not pay much attention to Aboriginal issues in the book he writes. Though he devotes one whole chapter to describe the aboriginals but that too is reflective of a lack of survey that he talks about. It describes only a basic and grossly homogenized view of the natives as people with primitive tastes and choice for vulgarity and crude lifestyle and in this way endorses the long standing White perspective of the aborigines. In Favenc and Swinburne the Aboriginals are only passingly referred to in connection with the White history.

It is this lack of survey that Sutherland talks about which might have given rise to the notion that the Aborigines are miserable savages. William Dampiere's comment on the Aborigines quoted in Sutherland explains this position:

The inhabitants are the most miserable wretches in the universe, having no houses nor garments. They feed upon a few fish, cockles, mussels, and periwinkles. They are without religion and without government.

What Dampiere fails to see is that the Aborigines have their own well defined set of belief systems and a very indigenous set up of administration. Sutherland approves of Dampiere's take on the aborigines and yet in the section titled "The Aborigines" in his book he gives a description that contradicts his approval:

Each tribe of from twenty to a couple of hundred dusky forms wandered over the land, seeking animals to hunt and fresh water to drink. They were very thinly spread, not more than one person to ten square miles, yet every little tribe was at deadly feud with its neighbour.

In this comment about the Australian natives the writer exhibits deviation from his earlier stand. He accepts that the Aborigines, who are primarily hunters, have a very primitive system of social organization and that implies however rudimentary it is, the aborigines do have a place for society in their lives. As far as lack of Aboriginal religion is concerned there are ample

references to 'Dreamtime' in numerous documents that bear witness to a well-defined native belief system which is in contradiction with the White perspective. What is important to note here is that aboriginal religion has been negated by the white historicists only because it does not conform to the White belief in an anthropomorphic God.

It is this image of a godless, chaotic population that has helped in projecting Aborigines as hostile savages. A passage from Favenc's book which quotes Captain Mitchell- a white explorer in the continent- betrays such attitudes quite well :

I never saw such unfavourable specimens of the aborigines as these children of the smoke, [Referring to their constant habit of burning the grass.] they were so barbarously and implacably hostile, and shamelessly dishonest, and so little influenced by reason that the more they saw of our superior weapons and means of defence, the more they showed their hatred and tokens of defiance. (88)

Here Mitchell is referring to the natives' non-cooperation with the white explorers while the latter tried to invade the lands which rightfully belonged to the former. The very occasion of Mitchell's former comment is a collision between his men and the natives about which Favenc writes:

One of the blacks ...tried to snatch the kettle of water from the hand of the man who was carrying it; and on being resisted he struck him senseless with his nulla-nulla. The companion of the wounded man shot [him]...The tribe now advanced against them, and two shots were fired in self defence, one of which accidentally wounded a gin. Three men from the camp hearing the firing came up, and one more native was shot... War being thus declared, a careful watch was kept up, but no attack was made, and the explorers departed unmolested

Careful reading of the lines discloses how the blacks were constantly under the threat of being destroyed in the face of White gun-power. More frightening is the way this perpetual threat is veiled under the cover of self-defense. In John Forrest's account of the explorations in Australia quoted in Swinburne there is another such example. In his diary entry dated June 13, 1874 Forrest writes of his apprehension to be attacked by the native. The same entry also expresses his willingness to shoot the natives in case of any observed peril:

The natives seem determined to take our lives and, therefore, I shall not hesitate to fire on them should they attack us again. (n.pag.)

But a further entry dated June 14th reveals something else:

The natives did not return to the attack last night. In looking round camp we found the traces of blood where one of the natives had been lying down. This must have been the foremost man, who was in the act of throwing his spear, and who urged the others on.

In both the instances, i.e. those by Mitchell and Forrest we find the Aborigines more sinned against than sinning. They are the ones who are made to live like aliens in their own lands, constantly threatened with their lives at their homeland and often suffering peril as consequence. In these books one can come across several instances proclaiming aboriginal threat towards White life but statistics show how drastically their population perished after the arrival of the Whites. Yet it is the rhetoric of history that makes them appear as threats to humanity and thus tries to justify their subjugation- although ironically- from humanistic perspective.

There is yet another kind of aboriginal stereotype that finds its way into White Australian historiography- i.e. the good and friendly aboriginal. The goodness of such figures is determined by their propensity to willful submission before the Whites. About such people Sutherland writes: "The natives are generally good-humoured, if properly managed" (n.pag.)The comment makes it clear that only the 'managable' natives can be considered 'good-humored' suggesting that the nature of the natives is to be judged according to white standards. More importantly this binary between the 'good' and the 'hostile' aborigines creates a plane for variegated reading of history to take us to as near to historical truth as feasible.

Thus we find that a re-reading of the books already mentioned has opened our access to two different sets of history texts. The first one is the professed and explicit set dealing with the history of the Whites and the second is an absent meta-text but a profound one referring to the history of the Aboriginal subjugation. But this is not the only possible meta text and indeed one has every chance of being intrigued by the possibility of decoding plural meta-texts that can include representation of women or Asian migrants for example. But these issues need distinct attention and hence are excluded from the domain of this paper.

To sum up I assert that the White historians of early Australian history have strategically tried to construct history to suit their needs. As has been already stated these books were prescribed texts for school children. Hence they were utilized as weapons in the war of ideological domination. Generations of Australians learnt to believe the truth furnished by White Australia to their own advantage. However, at the same time they were also instrumental in presenting a cue to alternative history by leaving unintentional gaps in the grand-narrative of history for readers to reinterpret. It is these lacunae or the gaps in the first set of historical narrations that has facilitated the discovery of the meta-texts in them.

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Gothic Elements in T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land": Voicing the Terrors of Modern Men

Manasi Patra

"This is the dust which will not settle in our time."

—Samuel Beckett (*All That Fall, a Play for Radio*)

Thomas Stearns Eliot's 1922 modernist poem "The Waste Land" presents itself as an alternative to the decaying society Eliot found himself traversing. It begins as a personal means of pulling together one's fragmented consciousness, but in doing so Eliot manages to present a solution to a world of selfishness-looking beyond ourselves. In fact, "The Waste Land" presents a dark and gloomy view of a zombified modern experience which is indeed a 'heap of broken images' where "the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water." The present paper highlights this gothic aspect of "The Waste Land" to show the bleakness of the modern world in terror, terror of spiritual death. Being a post-modern, Eliot deviates from the Romantic perception of 'gothic' with all "its doomed quest, the cursed wanderer, the medieval haunted castle, the solitary outcast, supposedly supernatural events, and the evil villain"¹. Instead, Eliot has employed the technique of gothic in a twisted way, not to escape from reality, but to present the reality of the post-war modern world with all its "despair, hopelessness, paralysis, angst, and a sense of meaninglessness, chaos and the fragmentation of reality."²

The term 'Gothic' is derived from the medieval style of architecture, suggestive of a passionate and barbarous world, filled with "high pointed arch and vault, flying buttresses, and intricate recesses"³ apparent in Europe from 12th to 16th century. But 'Gothic' as a literary genre reached its peak in the 19th century with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. During the English Romantic period, gothic literature

began to emerge as an escape from the conflict that society felt in the Age of Reason. The gradual economic and the social collapse made the writers of the age drawn to the world of fantasy, supernatural, and inexplicable tales to escape from this world. But post-modernism took gothic elements and twisted them to fit a more modern context. The elements of gothic saw a great change in the post-war modern world: the chilling effects of the horror are still the same, but the material to be gothicized has changed a lot. First and foremost, post-modernism adapted gothic principles of fear and haunting terror as a way to represent the fear of modern life- its central intelligence is in its appropriation of the Gothic mode enabling to present the violence and terror of post-modernity. Thus, post-modernism most often invokes images of extreme fear and terror, not with vampires or witches, but with the monsters we have ourselves created within the context of industrialized and civilized lives. Modernity has moved further from the original human condition, thus alienating the modern men, moving forward from subsequent struggles with subjectivity and scientific rationality, intensified ‘the situation to the extremity of negation’. In this way “The Waste Land” perfectly suites this genre of the Gothic literature as an expression of emotional starvation filled with horror of vulgarity and the shy sympathy with the common life, the ascetic shrinking from sexual experience and the distress at the drying up of the Spring of sexual emotion, with the straining after a religious emotion which may be made to take its place.

T.S.Eliot’s “The Waste Land” is truly a postmodern gothic poem as there is a good deal of terror and horror of the hollow waste landers here than the mere gloomy moods of a New Englander, representing an emotionally undernourished youth. The colonization by the Puritans of New England was merely an incident through which the middle class has brought a commercial as well as an industrial civilization to the European cities as to the American ones. The desolation, the aesthetic and spiritual drought of Anglo-Saxon middle class society oppresses London as well as Boston. The terrible dreariness of great modern cities is the atmosphere of “The Waste Land”. Amidst the dreariness, in brief, vivid images emerge the ephemeral pure moments of distilled feelings but towards the million nameless, performing barren office routines, wearing down their souls in interminable labor, whose pleasure are so sordid and so feeble that they seem sadder than their pains. “The Waste Land” becomes not only a place of desolation but of anarchy and doubt. In the post-war world of shattered institutions, strained nerves, bankrupt ideals – life no longer seems serious or coherent, no belief in the things they do and no heart for the fellow waste landers.

Eliot has employed several Gothic elements in “The Waste Land”, the most recurrent one being the image of death. Eliot sets this ominous tone of death from the very beginning, as in the epigraph Eliot brings in the reference of the ‘caged Sibyl’ from *Satyricon*, a satire by Petronius. In the epigraph Eliot stresses on the wish of the ‘Sibyl of Cumae’ who wishes ‘to die’ as she was gifted with eternal life, but not eternal youth. The epigraph at once invokes the tone of death-in-life existence which connects the reader with the existence of the modern men. Initially Eliot had chosen the last words of Kurtz from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* ‘The horror! The horror!’ as something ‘appropriate’ and ‘highly elucidative’. But when Ezra Pound complained that the epigraph is not ‘weighty enough’ for the poem, Eliot changes it with a passage even more terrifying than death itself; the anguished immortality of Petronius’ ‘caged Sibyl’. In her role as a prophetess and as trapped spectator, the Sibyl is associated with Tiresias in the poem. The tone of death is further heightened as the title of the first section ‘The Burial of the Dead’ recalls the service of the burial of the dead in the Church of England. But the main theme of this section is not the physical death but the spiritual death as the waste landers are in a spiritually dead state, for them “April is the cruellest month” as they do not want to rise from their state of oblivion. Winter is more preferable to them as that keeps them warm in ‘forgetful snow’. They are the habitants of a land which is nothing but ‘a heap of broken images’ where “summer surprised us... With a shower of rain ... And the dry stone no sound of Water.” Water, the life-giving source has gone dry in this dead land, as we find in the fifth and final section of “What the Thunder Said”.

“The road winding above the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water.”

[“The Waste Land”, ‘What the Thunder Said’, L-332-333]

This image of the dead land and its lack of water suggest not only the barrenness of London but the spiritual decay and dreariness which the rising economic prospect has brought upon the Londoners. They have become mere shadows of death’s kingdom, but soon going to be turned into ‘a handful of dust’. The element of haunting is common which gothic literature and is replayed in Eliot’s image of the world’s Metropolis death as we find in ‘The Fire Sermon’,

“But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors,”

[“The Waste Land”, ‘The Fire Sermon’, L-196-197]

This ironic variation of Marvell's lines from "To His Coy Mistress" shifts the focus from physical death to the spiritual death. 'Death by Water' gathers up all the previous motifs of death by drowning- the drowned god of the fertility cults, phlebas, which recalls the card of drowned Phoenician sailor 'The Burial of the dead', Alonso's supposed shipwreck in *The Tempest*. The macabre ending of 'The Burial of the Dead' puts a final stamp of the irony of its title: far from resting in peace, the dead are like malignant tumors in gardens all over London.

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout?"

["The Waste Land", 'The Burial of the dead', L-71-72]

Death as a recurring symbol becomes even more apparent through the employment of a title like "The Waste Land", presenting a combination of past myth and present barren state of London. Not just in the title, but throughout the poem, Eliot makes use of several myths from fertility gods to Grail legends, which intensifies the tone of gothic as the poem moves between past and present. The basic symbol, "The Waste Land" of Eliot is taken from Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, where the land has been blighted by a curse. The plight of the land is connected with the plight of the lord of the land, the Fisher king, and rendered impotent by sickness. The curse can be removed only by the appearance of a knight. But Eliot changed the myth by shifting the meaning from physical to spiritual sterility. "The Waste Land" appears as the picture of post-war ailing Europe mainly London. But this London is not exclusively the City of Thanes. It is fog-ridden and dusky, no fierce lights beat upon the gloominess of the city except the pale winter rays. Eliot's London admits no brilliant colors. He hardly allows his readers to enter the metropolis in summer months; even when a geranium is allowed to signal the warm season, it is 'sunless' and 'dry'. Like Baudelaire's *'fourmillante cite'*, Eliot's 'unreal city' is also haunted by ghosts who do not confine their activities to night time graveyards, are not even clearly dead. Instead, they appear as the 'caged Sibyl' or 'the hyacinth girl', the 'typist' girl, suspended in a state of discomfiting betweenness, 'neither/Living nor dead' impossible to classify and exorcise. The waste landers live in a state of 'buried life', they await the spring rains resentfully. They are merely post war modern men 'who fixed their eyes before his feet' imprisoned in spiritual solitude that recalls the story of the death of Ugolino in Dante. M.R. Williamson, Cleanth Brooks followed by others pointed out that the numb masses tramping over London Bridge are like those crowding Dante's

vestibule, pursuing any tattered banner that flutters along, regardless of where it may lead them. Those who had committed 'il gran refinto' Hell itself could be a release from the perpetual aimlessness devised as a punishment for their selfishness and cowardice, but even Hell rejects them, while Eliot's wasteland city is inhabited by these miserable throngs, but not presided over by any of the fearsome deities, who ruled Thomson's city of Dreadful Night or Expressionist Berlin. The ghosts which occasionally walk the urban thoroughfares of Eliot's wasteland, mingling with the anonymous neither-living-nor-dead crowds, hardly have the eeriness of Baudelaire's or Rimbaud's specters. Eliot's metropolitan spook Stetson, or the familiar compound ghosts of 'Little Gidding', or the blind prophet Tiresias wear the well-known features and stir compassion and anxiety about the protagonist's own fate rather than horror in the Divine Comedy manner; in fact, the ghostly encounters is so obviously patterned on Dante that Eliot himself must have been fully conscious of parallels. Apart from that Dante's journey through Hell begins on Friday evening, and he emerges on the other side of the earth on Easter Sunday morning. Dante's journey lies inside the three-day rhythm of redemption where Christ is buried on Friday morning. Similarly in "The Waste Land", particularly in 'The Burial of the Dead', the lower class crowd streaming through are the damned in Dante. But here Christ appears as Isaiah's "shadow of a rock in a weary land", or 'the hooded figure' in 'What the Thunder Said',

"There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
But who is that on the other side of you?"

["The Waste Land", 'What the Thunder Said', L-359-365]

It immediately connects with the reference of 'The Hanged Man', symbol of the crucified Christ in 'The Burial of the Dead'. But in 'What the Thunder Said' the setting shifts from the 'heap of broken images' to the open countryside of Paul's journey to Emmaus and Shackleton's Antarctic expedition. Here, specters continue to accost the living 'en plein jour' in full day light, calling into question the perceptions and sanity of those to whom they appear. These are ghosts, both verbal and visual, manifested sometimes as disembodied voices 'voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells', or in the 'empty chapel' that 'has no windows and the swinging doors' or the 'tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours' has further gothicized the atmosphere. The sound of the tolling bells at once reminds us of the dead

sound of Saint Mary Woolnoth church. But what is more eerie is the voice of the voiceless bodies in the sound “high in the air/ Murmur of maternal lamentation” coming from the ‘falling towers’ or ‘Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/ Vienna London’ the music of the strings of ‘her long black hair’ or that ‘bats with baby faces’ who ‘beat their wings’. The sound of the wind in ‘What the Thunder Said’ evokes the fear of something unknown:

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman.

[“The Waste Land”, ‘What the Thunder Said’, L-359-364]

Like so many other figures in the poem, the dead often walk as though alive and the living often walk as though dead, the phantasm defies traditional oppositional hierarchies, is it male or female? Alive or dead? A mirage or an authentic vision. The city of ‘The Waste Land’, in Elizabeth Drew’s vision was once the maternal symbol to the ancients, but now utterly barren. It is neither biblical harlot nor the city of the gods, rather it is the receptacle that holds millions of people unable to reach across to one another.

In “The Waste Land” as in the other poems like “The Hollow Men”, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” that are soaked in urban imagery, a small number of fixed topographical features keep cropping up. The most frequent one is the street motif which, Rudolf Germer argues, stands for the ugliness and repulsiveness of reality. The street looms as the only alternative to the closed room- “I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street / with my hair down,” – yet it constitutes no escape from a person to person deadlock in a shattered room as there is no communication with the passerby. In Eliot’s poetry the street is not only a scene but an agent, as when it pursues Prufrock or decoys the walker by means of lamplight pattern to spiritual crucifixion. Lower Thames Street means wharves, warehouses, barges, fish vendors and manual labourers: and by staging Stetson’s encounter among white collar workers surging into the city, Eliot suggests an aspect of timelessness in the movement of the masses, an aspect also hinted at in the *Inferno*, allusions and the reference to the Punic Wars. The other gothic images that Eliot has brought into the poem are the images of ‘rock’ and ‘water’. In “The Waste Land” the invitation to come in under the shadow of the rock might seem a

welcome to the desert traveler, tormented by the sun, echoing as it does the Christian connotations of the rocks- faith, protection, even fecundity; but in reality it is the embodiment of the ultimate terror as it gives, “the shadow at morning, striding behind you/ Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you”; which will lead the modern men to the fear of being transformed into ‘a handful of dust’. In ‘The Burial of the Dead’ the rock appears to be a part of the desert scene which marks the sterile expanse of the barren metropolis right behind the mountains. Rock becomes the symbol of the desert scene where physical suffering gives way to flashes of purely spiritual anguish whereas the ‘blue rocks’ of “Ash Wednesday” outlines a state of suspension between life without faith and religious insight. In ‘What the Thunder Said’ the rock signifies drought “Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves/ Waited for rain.”

Eliot has contrasted rock and water in a series of narrow variations to hammer the water-rock dichotomy into the reader with great subtlety. He then fuses the two concepts in the brief moment where the longing becomes so intense that it has turned into a mirage “ sound of water... But there is no water” as in waste land gardens are never far from urban district, the desert also lurks nearby by becoming integrated with the metropolitan scene. ‘What the Thunder Said’ may supply a dismal view of endless plains, but there right behind the mountains lies equally sterile expanse of metropolitan desert. The fisherman who plunges his bait into the canal behind the gas house sees only brown land. This brown land is nothing but a dead damp land filled with ‘lilacs’, ‘dull roots’ and ‘stony rubbish’. This damp land is suitable for harboring corpses like the cursed barren land of Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance*. But here the sickness is the spiritual barrenness of modern lords of civilization rather than the physical sickness of the mythical Fisher king. On the other hand, the garden of “The Waste Land” is no ‘Elfin Grot’ but the scene of some of the most horrible crimes. Philomela is ravished in a sylvan scene, but her voice after being transformed into a nightingale is heard not amongst the trees but in the desert. The hyacinth garden episode like Marie’s summer memory opens up the note of romantic despair but slightly melancholy which invokes an unqualified yearning to have the romance of the past. In this episode Eliot dramatizes both Celia’s dream and her wandering afterwards “if that is all meaningless”. This failure to speak, to see, to know the voice of the waste land reveals the agonized speculation of a man asking ultimate questions which his conscience is afraid to answer. It is in this loveless melancholy garden that for the first time we get to see the character of Tiresias

which later acts as the disembodied narrator of Eliot, the mirror to the reality, to the love relationship of the men and women in the waste land. While talking about water imagery George Williamson makes an over simplification when observing that water “assumes a positive character whenever the lack of it is felt whereas it is normally negative or something to be feared”. Eliot’s self-contradiction in handling the fertility motif of Miss Weston undercuts every instance of water imagery of the poem. Rain is desperately wanted in desert scene, but ‘April’ showers is ‘cruel’; then again, the surprising summer rain and the wet hair of the hyacinth girl accentuate the hints of wistfulness coupled with the tragic memory of Tristan’s death and unfulfilled love. Death by drowning is to be feared while implicitly holding a hope for rebirth by virtue of connection with the drowned god and his resurrection; but in the desiccated waste land the prospect of rebirth is a terrifying one as “winter kept us warm, covering Earth in forgetful snow”. The sea -”symbol of man’s subconscious mind”, appears here as desolate and empty. Therefore water that stands in fertility motif for spiritual rebirth offers no help for the unconscious mind of the waste landers. The water for which the poet longs in twilight desert of his dreams is to quench the spiritual thirst which torments in the London dusk like the old man in “Gerontion” who in a dry month thought of the young man who fought in the rain. Eliot makes water the symbol of all freedom, all fecundity, flowering of the soul invokes in desperate need, the memory of an ‘April’ shower of his youth, the song of the hermit thrush with its sound of water dripping and the vision of the drowned Phoenician sailor sunk beyond “the cry of girls and the deep sea swell”, who has at least died by water, not thirst. In “The Waste Land”, Eliot uses tropes of gender ambiguity to explore the relationship between sexual and spiritual knowledge, between traditional gender roles and prophetic revelation. In the poem Eliot uses ‘different voices’ of both men and women. This technique of multiple voices is another trait which intensifies the horror and terror of the waste land which not only complements the fragmented structure of the poem but also intensifies the disharmony and disorder of the thought of modern men. In “The Waste Land” the anxiety of the waste landers that lies beneath the surface terrifies not only Eliot’s ‘different voices’ but also the narrative voice that stands behind them. Even the most unthinking and resistant characters find themselves being pushed towards a moment of discovery that will tell them whether the ‘silence’ at the heart of life is meaningless or not. Even adolescent yearnings- the moment in the hyacinth garden constantly threaten to reveal themselves as the ghoulish manifestation of something other than love. At the heart of the poem is a sense of

worthlessness, not only of the present but of the probable worthlessness of the past and the future. It is at this juncture that Eliot has placed the character of Tiresias within whom the poet has combined the Oedipus myth and the voice of the zombified modern consciousness. Tiresias, the blind prophet is the one character who remains present all through the poem and almost among all the characters. He is the character which connects king Oedipus' waste land. As Eliot puts it: "Tiresias although a mere spectator and not indeed a character, is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant seller of currants melts into Phoenician sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman and two sexes meet in Tiresias."⁴ In the delineation of Tiresias, Eliot again presents the nostalgic mood of the mythic past in order to make him the orator of the hollowness of the modern men. Watching the depressing spectacle of modern humanity fallen from the ancient heights, values and sanctities, he is at once the relic of the past and the inhabitant of the present, both a prophet and detached spectator of the agonizing drama of contemporary history. He is the mythic version of the modern 'Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante' with 'a wicked pack of cards'. Tiresias gets his prophetic vision from *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone* where he is the blind prophet who knows that Thebes has been cursed because of Oedipus' patricide and incestuous marriage with his mother. In "The Waste Land", Tiresias is associated with the 'caged Sibyl' of the epigraph through his longevity and gift of prophecy. His prophetic vision lays bare the sordid care, languid pursuits, vacuum, and boredom of modern men, the contemporary caged sibyls. Eliot has truly made Tiresias a character where 'two sexes meet' as he speaks with both the voices of man and woman to reveal the reality of man-woman relationship in the waste land. In 'The Fire Sermon' Tiresias who appears as 'old man with wrinkled dug' highlights the dysfunctional relation between the young man carbuncular and the typist girl like the love of the high society woman that leads to mere 'nothing'. In the love of the waste landers "his vanity requires no response, / And makes a welcome of indifference" and she hardly aware of the departure of her lover feels happy that their game of chess is over for the day. Tiresias, not only through the relation of the typist but with the other several references make it clear that there is no love between modern men and women in the loveless modern and commercial waste land where humans are nothing but throbbing 'human engine'. Eliot has employed bisexuality within him to show the mobility and indeterminacy of modern men as we find in the proposal of the 'Smyrna merchant'. But Tiresias, however, is not the unifying

consciousness of the poem. Like Dante's augurs and diviners, Tiresias can only look back but is denied a vision of future. Eliot's presentation also stresses the simultaneity of time. The episode of the typist and the clerk is set within the temporal perspective offered by Tiresias's encompassing consciousness as he had "fore suffered all/Enacted on this same divan or bed;" so that the mythical past is reduced to the level of this low love making episode.

Apart from the terror of death, fear of the barrenness, and several gothic images, the structure of 'The Waste Land' equally helps to portray the gothic image of the poem as gothic imaginary works on a number of different levels to support the theme of terror and linguistic frustration. Like any other ghostwriting medium, Eliot in 'The Waste Land' also summons a great number of writers of the past like Dante, Baudelaire, and Shakespeare to speak through him. Their jumbled and fragmentary voices are frequently interrupted by other less exalted forms of discourse: music hall deities, pub conversations, the plaints of spirits without a name. In 'The Waste Land' Eliot consciously or unconsciously transcends the barriers of history as without which the poet's own mediumistic work would have been rendered unnecessary. This enormous knowledge of the pastness of the past and its presence in the present has provided the poem with multiple voices that suits its fragmentary structure. Eliot persistently thought about the relations between the different phrases of human experience and deliberately wrote in fragmented words, expressions and phrases to reveal the fragmented consciousness of the post-war Europe. But at the same time we find the tone of nostalgia in his poems to retain the masterly synthesis of the past. This tone of nostalgia is achieved through the poet's delineation of the mythic past where he followed the footsteps of James Joyce as he wrote in 'Ulysses, Order and Myth' "in using myth...in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporary and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him." Eliot has employed several myths from the Fisher king, fertility gods, Tiresias to the Grail Legends, Christian stories with other Buddhist and oriental analogies to give shape and significance to "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" and to retain the quest for life and spirit of regeneration amidst the barren land of 'stuffed men'.

'The Waste Land' is the true picture of the post-war Europe, a dead 'cactus land' standing like a 'Paralysed Force' with a deep sense of loss, displacement and deprivation. In the age of ironical great wars, the conscience of Modern men has lost all its vitality, became fragmented, the 'waste of desert sand', a

shape without any form, color and motion. Modern urban civilization deprived of love, novelty and fresh thoughts assumes a “shape of Lion body and the head of man” with blank and pitiless gaze revealing deep marks of weakness and woe. But in the midst of all turmoil and upheaval of the Modern commercial post-war period the poet still longs for the harmony and order of the past that can be the only cure for the broken, fragmented and dusty urban modern mind and will help to germinate again the quest for life, love and fertility. His heart and soul finds solace first time – it is the place which is the poet’s abode of universal peace, or as the bird wrote in his nostalgia which intensifies the gothic effect of ‘The Waste Land’ as the poet for returning back to the moment from where it all has started- “ We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time” – it is the place which is the poet’s peaceful abode of the mythic past “ Santih,santih,santih.”

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**Hindi Translation of T. S. Eliot's Three Poems: Preludes,
Marina and The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock**

Pratima Das

1. PRELUDES

I

The winter evening settles down
With the smell of steaks in passage ways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps 5
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The shower beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots, 10
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lightning of the lamps.

II

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer 15
From the sawdust- trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee stands.
With the other masquerades
That time resumes, 20
One thinks of all hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited; 25
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling,
And when all the world came back 30
And the light crept up between the shutters
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands;
Sitting along the bed's edge, where 35
You curled the papers from your hair,
Or clasped the yellow souls of feet
In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV

His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block, 40
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
And evening newspapers and eyes
Assured of certain certainties, 45
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.
I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle 50
Infinitely suffering thing.

Wipe your hand your mouth, and laugh;
The world revolves like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

Hindi Translation of Preludes in Roman Script:-

Purvarang

I

Sardi ki sham dhal jati hain
Bhune mansh ki gandh galiyon par
Cheh baje.

Khatamn huye dhuye se dino ke jalte- tukre
Aur aab ek zor ki barish
Kichar se sane tukre
Sukhe huye patte ghere tumhare pau ko
Aur akhbar khali jaghaho se;
Woh barish ki bauchar
un tute khirkiyo aur chimney ki nalil par,
Aur gali ke ek kone mein
Ek gari ka akela ghora hafte aur pau patakte
Uske baad gas-battiyo ka jalna.

II

Subah sajad hoti hain
Halke sare beer ki badbu
Aati hain bhuse-biche rasto par
Apne kichar bhare peir jo chalte hain
Bhor ki coffee-theek(dukan) ki taraf
Samay bivinaa mukhote pehne,
Hamare sammukh aata hain,
Koi soche woh sabhi haton ko
Jo kholte hain gande pardo ko
Hazaro susachjit kamro mein.

III

Tum kambal ko bistar par patakar,
Tum peeth ke bal lethkar, aur intezar karti
Tum adhuri nind mein, dekhti ho raat ke
Hazaro ghinone chitra,
Jisse tumhari aatma bani hain.;
Ve jalte –bujhte rehte hain chath(ceiling) par.
Aur jab sari duniya wapas aa gayi
Aur roshni chupke se andar ghusi shutters se
Aur tumne gaureiyo/chiriyo ko chahchahate suna gande naalo par,
Tumne ese drishya dekhe rasto ke
Par shayad yeh raste ese samajh nahin pate;
Khat ke kinare baithe, jahan
Tumne khole, mure kagaz apne baalon se,
Ya pakre pile pau ke talwo ko
Apne dono gande hatheliyo se.

IV

Uski aatma aasman mein lambi hokar
Jo vilin ho jaye bhawan- samuh ke piche
Ya rondhe gaye lagatar pau dwara
Jab char aur panch aur chhey baje;
Aur chote-bedhange ungliya pipe ko thush kar bhare
Aur sham ke akhbaar, aur aankhe
Jinhe viswas hain kuch yakino par
Who kale rasto ke vivek, jo
Adherye is prithvi ko apne mein sametne ke liye
In sab chitro ko ghare jo kalpanayein hain
Who mujhe spandhit karte hain
Who dharna jo-kuch chirkal komal
Chirkal yatna purna.

Apne muh ko apne haton se ponch lo, aur hanso
Sare viswa ghumte-hi rahenge vridh aurto ki tarah
Jo indhan(upte) ekatha karti hain khali bhumi par.

2. MARINA

Quis hic locus, quae region, quae mundi plaga?

What seas what shores what grey rocks
and what islands
What water lapping the bow
And scent of pine and woodthrush
singing through the fog
What images return
O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog,
meaning

Death

Those who glitter with the glory of the
hummingbird, meaning

Death

Those who sit in the sty of contentment,
meaning

Death

Those who suffer the ecstasy of the
animals, meaning

Death

Are become insubstantial, reduced by a

wind,
A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog
By this grace dissolved in place
What is this face, less clear and clearer
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—
Given or lent? More distant than stars
and nearer than the eye
Whispers and small laughter between
leaves and hurrying feet
Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint
Cracked with heat.
I made this, I have forgotten
and remember.
The rigging weak and the canvas rotten
Between one June and another
September.
Made this unknowing, half conscious,
Unknown, my own.
The garboard strake leaks, the seams
need caulking.
This form, this face, this life
Living to live in a world of time beyond
me; let me
Resign my life for this life, my speech for
that unspoken,
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the
new ships.

What seas what shores what granite
islands towards my timbers
And woodthrush calling through the fog
My daughter.

The Hindi translation of the poem Marina in Roman Script:-

Marina

Kya sagar, kya kinare, kya dhusar parvat/pahar
aur dwip
Kya pani chalke jahaj ke samne
Aur pine ki khushboo aur who van-pakshi
Ga rahi hain kohre mein
Kya chitra(kalpanayein) vapas aa rahi hain
O meri beti!

Jo kutto ke danto ko tej kare,
matlab
mrityu
Jo chamke gunjan-pakshi(hummingbird) ke khushi se,
matlab
mrityu
Woh jo santusht hain sukar-sala jaise,
matlab
mrityu
Woh jo anubhav kare jantuyo ka ullash,
Matlab,
Mrityu
Yeh sab ban jate hain astitwa hin, kshin ho jate hain,
Ek hawa se,
Ek pine ki saans, aur woh van geet kuhre mein
Is ashirvad se mujhe woh mili.

Yeh kya mukh-mandal hain, aspashth se aur spashth
Bahon mein rakth dhamniyo ki spandhan kabhi durbal to kabhi
Shaktishali(tej)
Mujhe jo (dan)diya gaya ya mujhe jo udhar mila?
Taro se jyada dur aur aankho se jyada pas/karib
Phusphusahat aur muskurahat, patto aur dorte peiro ke bich
Nind mein magna, jahan samudra aur sab nadiyo ka pani
Aakar mile.

Jahaj ka sabdara barf se tute aur rang chute garmi se
Maine yeh banaya, main bhul gaya
Aur yaad aaya.
Woh kamjor rassi jahaj ki, aur woh sara pal
Ek June aur dusre Sitamber ke bich
Jo banaya agyan se, aadhe sachet hokar, woh mera ho gaya
nao ke ansh mein chedh se pani ghush raha hain
Aansh-vishesh ki marammat ki zaroorat hain
Yeh chehra, yeh jivan
Pranbandh is prithvi ke समय me jine ke liye
Lekin समय atikram karke bhi jiyoge.
Cholo main,
Is parthiv jivan ka tyag karoon,
Us amar jivan ke liye

Meri vani, us unkahe ke liye
Woh jage huye, khule honth, woh aasha, woh nayi jahaje

Kya sagar, kya kinare, kya granite ke updwip mere
Emarti lakri ki taraf
Aur van-pakshi pukare kuhre mein
Meri beti.

3. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona chi mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one- night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question.....
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,

And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

 In the room the women come and go
 Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
[They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by simple pin—
[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"]
Do I dare disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all—
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee-spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.

 So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
 And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.

 And should I then presume?
 And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?...

Hindi Translation of T. S. Eliot's poems

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep... tired... or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon
a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the
floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old...I grow old....
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

The Hindi translation of the poem **The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock** in Roman Script:-

Je. Alfred Prufrock ka prem geet

Cholo hum chalet hain tab, tum aur main
Jab sanjh faili hui hain ambar mein pratikul,
Jaise ek mariz ether se behosh para ho table par;
Chalo hum chalet hain, kuch aadhi-thukrai galiyon mein se,
Va barbarate aashrayon
Mein gujarte hain raat, in saste hotelo mein jahan log jate
Ek-raat ke sambhog ke liye
Aur bhuse bhare restaurant, seep-kosh ke sath:
Raste anusaran karti lambe vitark ki tarah
Jo anjane mein hi tumhe
Umarte hue prasno ki taraf le jaye....
Oh! Mat pucho, "yeh kya hain?"
Chalo hum chale aur jakar mile.

Kamre mein se mahilayein aate aur jate
Michelangelo ke bare mein baat-chit karte.

Woh billi-sam pili –dundh jo apni pith ragre Khirkiyo-ke-shisho par,
Woh pila-dhuan jo apni muh ragre khirkiyon-ke-shisho par
Apni jibh se chate sanjh ke kono-kono ko
Nalo ke gaddho se gande pani ko nikalte dekh theharna
Uske pith par girne de, vo kalima jog ire chimniyo se
Chat se phisalke, achanak ek chalang marti
Aur dekhkar ki vo ek komal-aktuber ki raat,
Ghar ko ohre ek baar, aur nind mein so jati hain.

Aur avashya hi woh samay aayega
Pile-dhuye ke liye jo galiyo mein se sarrak jai,
Apni pith ragre khirkiyo-ke-shisho se;
Aisa samay aayega, aisa samay aayega
Ek mukhote ko sajana taki woh mil sake un
Chehro se jinse tum milte ho;
Aisa samay aayega hatya aur sristi,
Aur samay milega sab karyo aur dino ke liye
Un hathon ke liye
Jo uthaye aur chore ek prashna tumhare thali par;
Tumhare aur mere liye samay milega
Aur phir bhi samay milega sau-sau shanshayo ke liye
Aur sau-sau swapna darshan
aur unke punah-punah sanshodhan ke liye
Toast aur chai pine se pehle.

Kamre mein se mahilayein aate aur jate
Michelangelo ke bare mein baat-chit karte.

Aur avashya aisa samay milega
Sochne ko, “Kya maine sahas kiya?” aur, “Kya maine sahas kiya?”
Samay milega piche murne ka aur sidiyo se utarne ka,
[Ve kahenge: “Are! kaise uske baal patle ho rahe hain!”]
Meri subah ki coat, meri colar, uthi huyi thuthni par satthik baitthe
Meri kanth-langot kimti aur vinit, lekin kaske bandha ek saral pin se—

[Ve kahenge: “Lekin dekho kitne patle uski bahe aur pao!”]
Kya mera dusshash hain
Is brahmand ko prasna karu?
Ek pal ka samay hain
Nirnayo aur unke sanshodhan ke liye,
Jo aur ek minute mein hi palat jayengi.

Main janta huun sab din kaise kat te hain, sab janta huun—
Maine dekha hain har roz ka aana-jaana
Maine dekha hain, main samjha huun
Har din ke michilo ko, arthhin sham, subah , dopahar ko,
Maine apne zindagi ka har pal, kafi(coffee) ke chamacho se
Maap-maap kar nishesh kiya;
Us dur ek kamre se aate huye sangeet ke resh ko maine suna hain,
Suna hain maine lupt huyi us dhun ki resh.
Toh main khud par kaise viswas karu?

Maine in sab aankho ko dekh liya aur samajh bhi liya,
Sab dekh-chuka huun—
Woh aankhe jo mujhe ek dhanche mein dale,
Aur mujhe is dhanche mein dalkar, ek kire ki tarah
Board par pin se atka diya,
Aur jab main diwar par pin se atke hatar-phatar kar raha huun,
Tab kaise maib suruaat karu
Thu kar phenk ke khatam hote huye sigret-khoka
din sab aur mere jivan ke tarike?
Toh main khud par kaise viswas karu?

Main in sab bahon ko janta huun, un sabko maine jana hain—
Woh sab Gahno se saje bahein , gore aur nagna
[Lekin sarko ke lamp-post ki roshni mein,
dekha hain maine halke bhure rang ke rom bahon par!]
Kya yeh koi poshak se aati hui khusbu
Jo mujhse agram-bagram bulwaye?
Table par rakhi huyi bahein, ya shawl se dhaki huyi bahein.
Toh main khud par kaise viswas karu?
Aur kaise main shuruaat karu?

Kya main bolunga, main sanjh mein sankre rasto se gujra
Aur maine dhyon se dekha, kamiz-aastin pehne, khirkiyo pe jhuke huye,
Ekaki purusho ko jinke pipe se dhuan nikalte huye?

Mujhe hona chahiye tha ek jore bhadde katon wale chiz
Jo shant samudra ke gahrai mein ghume-phire aur taire.

Aur woh dopahari, woh sham, shanti se soye rahe!
Lambi ungliyo ke sahlane se,
Nind magna.... Thake....ya jwar-pidith
Farsh par lete huye, yahan tumhare aur mere pas.

Kya mujhme vo takath hogi, chai ,cake aur ice ke baad main
Un palon ko dhakel le jawun sankat mein,
jahan main prashna kar saku?
Main roya aur upwas kiya, roya aur prarthana kiya
Phir bhi maine dekha mere kate huye sir ki[halka sa ganja] aahuti di gayi
thali par,
Main koi sant nahin —— aur yeh koi bari baat nahin;
Maine apne gaurav ke muhurto ko jalte-bujhte dekha,
Aur maine dekha woh anant-kaalin sevak,
mera coat lekar, uphaas kar raha
Aur sidhi baat kahun toh main daar gaya tha.

Aur in sabke baad, iska koi mulya rehta,
Vo chai, vo cup, vo marmalade,
Vo porcelain chini-mitti ke chai ke saranjam ke baad,
tumhare aur mere kuch baat-chit ke bich,
Mere prashno ka koi mehatva rahega,
Main muskurakar is mamle ko ek niwale mein khatam karu
Is brahmand ko nichorkar, ek gendh bana kar
Use lurdka de zindagi aur maut ke prashno ki taraf,
Yeh kehne: “Main Lezarus, mrityulok se wapas aaya,
laut aaya sab kuch batane ko tumhare paas,
main tumhe sab-kuch bataunga”——
Agar koi mahila apne sar ka takiya thik karte huye kahe:
“Are mere baat ka yeh matlab hi nahin tha
Bilkul bhi yeh vichar nahin tha, samjhe!”

Aur in sabke baad, iska koi mulya rehta,
Mere prashno ka koi koi mahatwa rahega,
Vo sab suryaasth ke baad aur darwajo ke dahlizo ke baad,
Chai ke pyalo ke baad, farsh par ghisat te lambe ghagre ke baad, ——
Aur yeh, aur bhi aesi chize?—
Yeh asambhav hain bolna vahi jo main kehna chahta huun!
Agar koi jadu-lanthen shirayo ka naksha parde par dikhaye:

Agar koi takiya thik karte-karte ya shawl ko sharer se phenk kar kahe:

Nahin! Main yuvraj Hamlet nahin huun, hone ki baat bhi nahin thi
Main ek amaartya-sevak, jo kafi hain
Koi michil mein naam-hin ek jan, ek, do drishya shuruat ke liye,
Yuvraj ko mantrana deneke liye, uske naukar hone ke liye,

Khoshamadi ke liye, dalal hone ke liye
Sada satark, aur bari-bari baatein karna, lekin thora sa mandbhudhi,
Darasal ek bevakoof bhanr.

Main burha ho raha huun,..... main burha ho raha huun.....

Mujhe apni patloon modhke chalunga.

Kya main balon ko piche morunga?

Kya mera sahash hain ek paka-aam khane ke liye?

Main safed flannel patloon pehnunga, aur samudra kinare tehalunga.

Maine jal-pariyo ko ek-dusre ke sang geet gate suna hain.

Main sochta huun ki woh mere liye toh geet nahin gayenge.

Maine unhe lehro par chardkar gehre samudra ke paas jate dekha hain

Lehro ke safed baalon ko urdte huye maine dekha

Hawa jab behti hain toh samudra safed aur kaali dikhti hain.

Hum logo ne samudro ke kaksho mein kafi samay bitaya

Samudra-kanyayo sang jo laal aur bhure rang ke bicholiye ke mala pehne

Jab tak manushya ki aawaz hamein jagaye, aur hum duub jaye.

Editor's Note on The TGI Manifesto on Education and Culture in India

I met **Guenter Grass** for the first time through S. V. Raman of Max Mueller Bhavan, when the renowned novelist-playwright-poet and political activist, came to spend some time in Calcutta in early 1986. He insisted that I play the main role of the Boss (based on Brecht) when we decided to translate his *Plebeians* into Bangla from the German. To my amazement Grass and I became working partners in our theatre project *Biplaber Mohora* based on his play *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* which has now become part of our cultural history, volumes being written on it till date. Our partnership soon turned to intimacy. We, in fact, became part of each other's families. Grass often spoke to me of how the younger generation of students, writers and intellectuals (those that he met in India) disappointed him with their self-seeking dreams of instant success and disorderly lifestyle. He told me that he found a great sense of responsibility, a remarkable quiet dignity, and an unflinching, untopian practical idealism in the Older and Elder generations of Indians close to his age that he met. He gave me three examples of such extraordinary Senior Citizens; the great writer and activist Annada Shankar Ray, Kalyani Karlekar of Calcutta Social Project, and my father Ajit Roy, ex-officer of the British Indian Army during World War II. He found these three new-found friends of his to be his inspiration and role models during his visit.

Grass also found the young people in our theatre groups (*Theatre Arts Workshop* and *Shakespeare Society*) deeply impressive in their selfless commitment to theatre and collective action. So inspired was he that Grass urged me that we (he, I and us) should do something to build a great nation, like he and his colleagues of "Gruppe 47" did build from the ruins of a devastated Germany after World War II. His heartfelt suggestion was that we, in India, must wed the experience and the idealism of the old to the rampaging energies of the young.

These ideas germinated in us even after Grass left India in 1987, and was reviewed and sustained through many discussions with me whenever I was in Germany after that. Then he came to Kolkata in 2003 and helped give

shape to the following manifesto by working with my colleagues and my wife Shreela. Here Grass himself read this out, in front of a packed gathering in the rooftop space in our home as the *Manifesto* that the newly-formed *Tagore Gandhi Institute (TGI)* should attempt to actualize and put into practice.

—Amitava Roy

The TGI Manifesto

The Tagore Gandhi Institute for Service Learning and Culture Studies is committed to an ideal - the belief that education should empower, touch, transform, not only the lives of the educated, but also have the power to reach out and change for the better society at large. First thought of a few years back, the *Tagore Gandhi Institute* is fundamentally the outgrowth of an ideal that was sowed in the minds of its conceivers by interaction with a number of living seminal thinkers in the world, the most notable among whom was Herr Guenter Grass.

What emerged for the founders of TGI through long and frequent interactive encounters with *Herr Grass*, out of many many sessions of creative and intellectual ‘*adda*’, from the close camaraderie of translating and putting on stage Grass’s play *The Plebians Rehearse the Uprising (Biplaber Mohora* in Bengali), of friendly argument and debate was a vision (or simply a perspective) of India that we citizens of this great country tend to lose sight of, situated as we are, too close to the realities that surround us everyday. This was the vision of a mighty culture holding together a diversity of people, language, religions and customs. It was a vision too of India as a repository of values and value systems enshrined and *embodied especially in its senior citizens*, in their cumulative experience and collective wisdom.

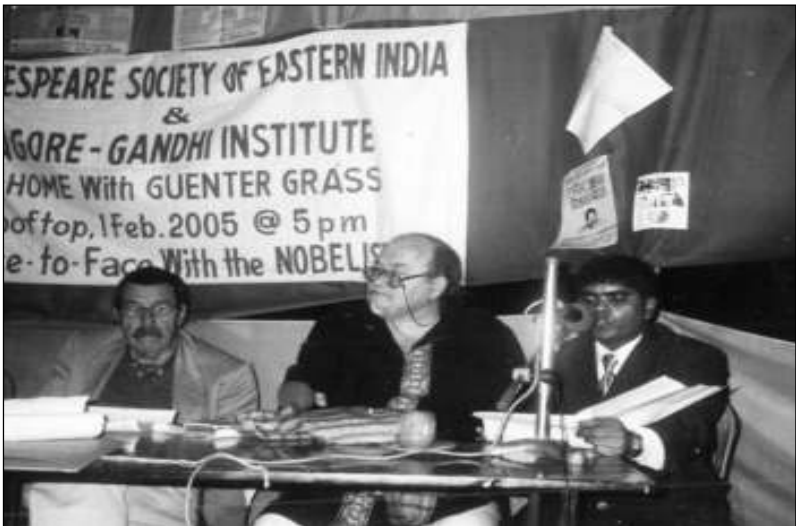
Today, these attitudes and commitments are all the more necessary, important and relevant, given the pervasive erosion of human values caused by the temporary forces of *globalization, rampant consumerism and commodification*. Integrity and honesty, compassion and service, are ideals that the younger generation today is gradually being distanced from, the children of our time not having appropriate role models to learn from.

The TGI Manifesto

It is in this scenario of despair that the *TGI* wants to make an intervention, however small the effort may initially be. The concept we envisage is the building of bridges between the elderly and the young, the generation of our fathers and that of our children, the initiation of a learning curve by which the future adults of tomorrow's world may learn lessons about a fulfilling life and a meaningful existence from the old in wisdom. The ultimate quest is the expression in action of the realizations of the young purified in the crucible of experience.

This project of *Tagore Gandhi Institute* is part of its wider object of engaging in socially and culturally constructive work. Members and associates of *TGI* are currently involved in studies and researches in the areas of Dalit literature, Gender issues, Culture and Performance and Service Learning. The objective now is to help in the creation of a human focus in which enlightened reason will be informed by a creative imagination, passion will be fused with a critical and questioning attitude. The *TGI* desires in short to develop thinking young minds that will not hesitate to interrogate the likes of Guenter Grass and Amitava Roy, who will not stop at but rather transcend the bounds of narrow self-interest and constrained ideologies.

-Subir Dhar, Shreela Roy and Core committee of TGI



Guenter Grass with Amitava Roy and Tapu Biswas at SSEI-TGI rooftop

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Tapu Biswas, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Dept of English and Other Modern European Languages, Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan, West Bengal. Jt. Secretary, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. Secretary, Tagore-Gandhi Institute for Culture Studies and Service -Learning. Co-Convener of the World Shakespeare Conferences from 2004 onwards. Recipient of UGC Research Award Post Doctoral Fellowship 2014-15.

An update on UGC -List of Journals

The UGC List of Journals is a dynamic list which is revised periodically. Initially the list contained only journals included in Scopus, Web of Science, and Indian Citation Index. The list was expanded to include recommendations from the academic community. The UGC portal was opened twice in 2017 to universities to upload their recommendations based on filtering criteria available at <https://www.ugc.ac.in/journallist/methodology.pdf>. The UGC-approved List of Journals is considered for recruitment, promotion and career advancement not only in universities and colleges but also other institutions of higher education in India. As such, it is the responsibility of UGC to curate its list of approved journals and to ensure that it contains only high-quality journals.

This is an ongoing process and since then the Committee has screened all the journals recommended by universities and also those listed in the ICI, which were re-evaluated and re-scored on filtering criteria defined by the Standing Committee. Based on careful scrutiny and analysis, 4,305 journals were removed from the current UGC-Approved List of Journals on 2nd May, 2018 because of poor quality/incorrect or insufficient information/false claims.

The Standing Committee reiterates that removal/non-inclusion of a journal does not necessarily indicate that it is of poor quality, but it may also be due to non-availability of information such as details of editorial board, indexing information, year of its commencement, frequency and regularity of its publication schedule, etc. It may be noted that a dedicated web site for journals is one of the primary criteria for inclusion of journals. The websites should provide full postal addresses, e-mail addresses of chief editor and editors, and at least some of these addresses ought to be verifiable official addresses. **Some of the established journals recommended by universities that did not have dedicated websites, or websites that have not been updated, might have been dropped from the approved list as of now. However, they may be considered for re-inclusion once they fulfil these basic criteria and are re-recommended by universities.**

The UGC would also like to clarify that 4,305 journals which have been removed on 2nd May, 2018 were UGC-approved

journals till that date and, as such, articles published/accepted in them prior to 2nd May 2018 by applicants for recruitment/promotion may be considered and given points accordingly by universities.

The academic community will appreciate that in its endeavour to curate its list of approved journals, UGC will enrich it with **high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. Such a dynamic list is to the benefit of all.**

Important Note

Two journals that were certified by UGC and does not appear now on the list are *Theatre International* and *International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences*. They were removed due to our websites not being updated. We have updated our websites and are now publishing these Journals as always with Peer-Review and ISSN Nos. as directed by the UGC in the above notification.

–The Editors of
Theatre International and
International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences

THE GAZETTE OF INDIA : EXTRAORDINARY

FROM TABLE : 3B

Criteria for Short-listing of candidates for Interview for the Post of Assistant Professors in Colleges.

“Research Publications (2 marks for each research publications published in Peer-Reviewed or UGC-listed Journals)”



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