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Vol. – XI, No. - XIV (Revised Edition)

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

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Contents

From the Editorial Desk

Its after a rather long fallow period that we are once again re-connecting with you, our readers. First there was a longish period of re-organization of various parameters of TGI in order to be included in the UGC CARE LIST, currently the highest academic certification for scholarly journals like ours. Not only is IJCSSS now in this list, it also covers certification for back issues too. The UGC has insisted that we bring out all issues of the journal as *printed material,* which can then be put online.

The other cause of delay is the world-wide Pandemic. The virus has left the whole world reeling and rudderless. India is about the second most infected and affected country together with the USA and the United Kingdom. Our Editorial Family comes from mainly these three countries (occasionally from Canada, Japan or Bangladesh): Bryan and Sheila Cavanagh (USA), Ronan and Antony (UK), Subir, Tapu and myself (AR) from India. Of these Antony Johae and myself, both being over seventy are at "high risk" from Covid. Bryan, Sheila, Subir and Tapu being much younger can hope to outlast the virus. Though no one in the world can claim complete immunity from Covid attacks.

Hence, during the last 8/9 months I did not bother any of the above editors as I knew they will be fighting their battles in Trump's America, Johnson's Britain and explosive-devastated Beirut while Subir, Tapu and I are stuck at home during forced Quarantine days currently called "Lockdown days".

I have been in sporadic touch with all of you. The consensus is that Life, Love, Death and Taxes, Education and Academic work and the work of the mind must go on even in the Plague Year(s). Shakespeare and Tagore emerged unscathed from Plague and Pandemic Flu, raging Malaria and terrible TB. So there's hope for us. On non-Lockdown days three hardy and heroic lads – Tapu, Sekhar, Tilok – and one not-so-hardy or heroic Senior Citizen ie. yours truly are getting together in the office to once again re-start Journal publication. Intrepid Protima Das, not a lad but a lady, joins us for these Journal – istic capers whenever she can. So my Colleagues be prepared in the midst of your physical and intellectual

struggles to receive a few E-Mails from us for Editorial help. As you all know, its best to go down fighting in the time of cholera and global collapse. Together with Kamala Harris we have to form a rainbow coalition with blacks, whites, green and brown (its best to leave out yellow at this time), to overcome.

We, from the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India, had invited Prof. Stan Dragland from Canada to Kolkata back in 1996 and then again in 2006 to deliver a Shakespeare Foundation Lecture on any area related to Shakespeare. Dr. Dragland chose to talk on the works of the much-awarded Sinhalese-Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje who was both a friend and one-time colleague of Dragland. Ondaatje is renowned in India and indeed the world over as the prize-winning author of *The English Patient.*

As we usually do with our foreign friends and guests from abroad we took Stan to various Universities and cultural centres (to name only two, Dibrugarh, Assam and Purulia, West Bengal) where he gave courses on Canadian Literature. We conducted various Workshops on Translation, Shakespeare's Theatre and performative practices, and literary genres. He was so taken up with India and the multiplicity of its cultural zones – Folk, classical, modern and postmodern and post colonial – the various dialogues between Marxists, Feminists, Existentialists and others that he vowed to return again and again to Indian and sub-continental shores.

In this issue we present a revised and expanded version of his Shakespeare Foundation Lecture on Ondaatje's *Running in the Family,* including Dr. Dragland's meditations on Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the possibilities inherent in the person and character of Edgar, the son of Gloucester.

Dr. Papia Mitra, Member Exec. Committee of the Shakespeare Society, is a regular contributor to thr Journal on matters classical. An accomplished Sanskrit scholar, she frequently lectures on Comparative Religion in India and other countries. Equally adept in Greek and Sanskrit mythology, the Epics and Dramatic Literature, She brings to bear her extensive knowledge of the Vedas, the Laws of Manu and associated texts on Kshatriya Dharma and the vexed question of non-violence in the Indian tradition.

The Kshatriyas or the Warrior classes were usually kings and monarchs in the classical Indian polity. Arjuna, Bheema, Duryadhona et al are much like Achililes, Hector, Agamemnon et al for whom the highest honour is to die fighting on the battlefield. Achilles was given the choice between a long, contented, peaceful quiet life and a short, action-filled life with a violent death with honour in battle. He chose the latter as the epic heroes

of the *Mahabharata* too would have gleefully done. This warrior code is also found in the Viking Sagas and in the advice of the Anglo-Saxon mothers to their sons going into battle: "Either return in triumph with your shield held high or on it – dead but with honour in battle".

Dr. Mitra's paper is a cogently argued counterblast against the much-touted concept of non-violence as the only Indian tradition. She shows that violence, as in the rest of the world, has been a major tradition with Indian kings and rulers from classical times up to the present.

Janardan Ghosh, research scholar at Vivekananda University, explores with much erudition the Rasa Theory. He does so in the context of its many classical commentators and in Bharata's *Natyashastra* (NS), the key text on the Performative Arts – song, dance, music, mime, acting – in the ancient Indian Tradition. His paper focuses on Anandavardhan's Rasa Dhani theory and clearly explains its postmodern ramifications. Ghosh's treatment of the Rasa Theory in relation to the Performative Arts makes two major contributors : (1) The differences between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natya Shastra* (2) How Indian Rasa Theory and Performative Arts traditions offer illuminating perspectives on Brecht's concept of alienation or the *Verfremdung effect*.

"All creation is the sport of my mad Mother Kali" and the world as a "lila" (play) of Krisna and the Gods are central to both the Sakta and Vaishnava faiths. Ghosh is particularly good on these ideas. He concludes with a very brief but suggestive take on the use of histreonies in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He was the 19th Century Bengali saint and the Guru of the 12 disciples led by Swami Vivekananda (Ghose's alma mater University) who founded the Order of the Ramakrishna Mission on May 1, 1897.

Ghose would do well to write another paper, monograph or even a book on Shri Ramakrishna, theatre and his performative ecstasies. He has the investigative capacity of the true researcher and the ability to theorise, historicise and problematise the findings.

Paloma Chatterjee has extensively examined the diverse and divergent theoretical studies on gender, environment, ecofeminism, colonization and postcolonial aftermath, Comparative Religion, Christianity, animism, folklore and indigenous tribal cultures. She also has experience of field work in Assam and the North East, being associated with an NGO. She brings together all this theoretical knowledge and on-the-ground practical experience to focus on the changing lifestyles and identity crises of the

Angami Nagas subjected to repeated colonial exploitation and religious assaults on their traditional ways of tribal existence.

Chatterjee uses three major writings by Easterine Kire – *A Naga Village Remembered, Terrible Matriarchy* and *Bitter Wormwood* for her work on the Angami Nagas. These texts meditate upon and record in fruitful detail the relationship of the Angamis with Nature, their gender system and their collision, confrontation and compromises with the Christian religion which entered their lives and society as part of colonial rule.

Writers like Kire, environmentalists like Vandana Shiva, postmodernist experts on cultural confrontation and their socio-political fallout like Stewart Hall and Edward Said have all written about Nature-Himan interaction, cultural domination, colonial expansion and how it goes hand in hand with religious takeover of a "backward" tribal civilization. For a most pithy and on-target view of how Colonialism, Capitalism and Religion work together we should go to Bertolt Brecht, the German playwright renowned for his entertaining revolutionary plays. Brecht has wittily but profoundly revealed this connection in many plays, specially in *Kalkutta 4th Mai* on the British takeover of India. The colonialists first arrive as traders and open a shop for marketing their goods. At the back of this shop stands a priest with Bibles. "In the beginning we had the land, and they had the Bibles. Very soon they got the land and we were left holding the Bibles" is the familiar cry coming out of all colonised societies.

Some may feel that Paloma's paper is beset with theoretical overkill. Be that as it may her paper clearly and movingly records the pain and agony of the Angami Nagas forced to accept change in their gender laws, views on economics, religion, agricultural practices and ethical world views under the White man's attack. She gives this back story well enough. But the Nagas and their various tribal-political factions are still trying, not with much success, to negotiate most of these problems even today.

Arpita Dasgupta's paper on 'Rupkathas' (fairy tales, folk-tales, lullabys, tales of fantasy and wonder) blends universal perceptions with close-analyses in a clear, jargon-free manner. This Editor (AR) grew up on his grandmother's lap hypnotised by the tales collected in 1907 by D. R. Mitra Majumder on his peregrinations in Bengal's villages and marvelously re-told by my granny. This oral tradition has thankfully continued unchanged in Bengal and elsewhere in India where grandmothers and mothers still exist and have the time and the inclination to entertain and educate the children of the family. Every night I went to sleep with my granny's and

mother's re-tellings filling my heart and soul with amazement, awe and wonder. I had the best of the East and the West too as my grandfather was commanded by my granny to tell me the stories of Greek myths and wonder-tales from all over the world. I was exceptionally fortunate to have a family of story-tellers who were able to spin a yarn at the drop of a hat, and not just at bedtime.

Arpita Dasgupta rightly points out the essential Bengaliness of the stories she analyses. But these stories have complex ancestry and come from multiple sources. From around the 14th Century onward a huge stream of narratives flowed across the continents and inundated India (itself the source of many such streams) and the rest of the world. The *Jataka Tales*, the *Panchatantra*, the *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the translations into French and English of the *1001 Nights* popularly known as the *Arabian Nights* told by Scherazade "to keep a drowsy emperor awake" all fed into this ocean of stories across the globe – what Rushdie calls a veritable 'sea of stories'.

Dasgupta brings under comparative focus 1907 and 2007. She shows how the landscape or seascape of the narratives have changed from Mitra Majumder's times (1907) to the re-tellings by Nabanita Dev Sen, the renowned womanist, activist, poet and writer.

The popularity and need for fairy and folk tales is even recognized by Kolkata's famed Great Eastern Hotel which till recently had a Dining Room Named 'Scherazade'. Everything changes. So do fairy tales. But Dasgupta fervently hopes in her conclusion that we should all try to cling to the good things of the past. As long as grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers and fathers and families exist fairytales will be there. In the West the Family is vanishing fast even though Peppah pigs are desperately fighting a rearguard action. In Modi's India, Trump's USA, Johnson's Britain, Putin's Russia the Machines, the Super Computers, AI, and the robots rule the roost. Can childhood, children and the Fairy Tales survive all this?

Dr. Tapu Biswas is India's foremost authority on matters Beckettian. I will end with a brief reference to a highly successful Indianized stage version of *Waiting for Godot.* He has written in detail about this production by *Mimesis* theatre group in his book on *Waiting for Godot*, *Indian Interpretations* published in 2004. Pradip Banerjee was the translator-adapter and the play entitled *Iswar Babu Aschen* was published by P. Lal, of Writers' Workshop and is now out of print. Amitava Roy, who played the part of Pozzo (here called Haripada) and alternatively Vladimir (here

called Godai) recollects "After our first production of Waiting for Godot in 1969 it was performed with quite some regularity between 1969 and 1975 – with as much regularity that a non-profit Bengali theatre group could muster. Mimesis and Theatre Arts Workshop from the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India got together to stage this play for over 6 years. No other group staged this play as many times as we did. An application for performance rights was sent to Samuel Beckett. Beckett was very magnanimous and himself replied saying that he had requested his agent to give us the performance rights. He asked us to go ahead as he was very happy to know that a Bengali theatre group from 10000 miles away was performing *Wating for Godot*. He assured us that there won't be any problem and part of this note by Beckett has been included in the Writers' Workshop publication. Beckett got the Nobel Prize in 1969 and our play was regularly performed for over 6 years till 1975 making Beckett a household name in Bengal.

I would usually play Pozzo as my physical build, shape and my personality appears to be very dominating. Our production required a very high degree of physicalization. On the surface the play is very verbal, but the non-verbal action under the surface required a lot of body and bounce, where the body itself becomes a metaphor in action.

The play was a trascreation adapted into the Bengali ethos. Not only were the names changed – Bhuto, Godai, Nibaron, Haripada – the text was presented by the use of Tagore songs that embodied the meaning of the scenes and actions and situation the characters found themselves in. The media hailed it as a landmark Asian production of Beckett.

Rupsa Mukherjee Banerjee in Feminine Being and Existence: a Study of Adrienne Rich's Poems brings together a vast range of theory and theorists from de Beauvoir to Irigaray, Freud to Foucault. Some readers might find this to be a bit too much, but nevertheless her take on Rich's poems are clear and cogent. At times Rich stitches into her imagistic poems images from Leni Riefenstahl's stunning film *Triumph of the Will* celebrating Hitler, the blond athletes of the Master Race and the Berlin Olympics. Adrienne Rich is either naïve or willfully ignorant or really knows what she is doing in these poems. Among other things, the poems are about female homosexuality. Hitler of course has been portrayed by his enemies as a "hijra" or eunuch of uncertain sexual ability and orientation. As the lampoon sung by the British soldiers during WWII indelicately suggests:

"Hitler had one big b – /And Goebbells none at all." We know of

Hitler's predilection for blonds, dogs ad boys all of which he used for his sexual and "scientific" purposes. Riefenstahl's oblique presence in Rich's verses points towards the Fascistic domination of the Blond Beasts over women and members of the dispensable Jewish race. This gives some credence to the accusations of Fascism against Rich, Irigaray et al who on the surface seem to be fighting for women's sexual freedom and independence from all suppressive structures.

Anita Desai, one of the most significant woman novelist has added a new dimention to Indian-English fiction by focussing on the inner world of her character. Her exploration with the individual and his/her psychic complexities sets her aprt from her contemporaries. *Cry, The Peacock* (1963) her first novel, deals with Maya who is trapped in a difficult marriage to Gautam who is much older. Dr. N. Banita Devi, well-known scholar and faculty member of Dept. of English and Cultural Studies in Manipur University has closely explored a new discourse on the female desire, anger and hysteria in Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock.*

History does not exist. Only texts do. Time does not exist, only diachronic and synchronic confusion. Subjectivity is always dismembered. Premanjana Banerjee meditates on such issues with some help from De Laureties, Jameson, Hutcheon, Baudrillard et al to give us interesting perspectives on three kinds of historiographic metafiction, Toni Morison's *Beloved,* Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* and D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* are offered as studies highlighting the dilemmas of authors and readers in postmodernist times. We are left wondering what is "real", what is "unreal", are there "realities" and "unrealities"? Who is a Historiographer, who is a Novelist? What forms our subjectivity, if it exists at all?

Pratima Das, renowned translator/transcreator into Hindi of Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, Indian English poets et al here focuses on Tagore's ontroversial novel *Gora.* She observes: "This is the right time to examine Gurudev's critique of Nationalism, women's liberation, Caste and class bigotry when all these issues are buffeting our polity. We always turn to Rabindranath in times of crisis to listen and learn from his voice of sanity."

Das takes up the English translation of *Gora* by W. W. Pearson published in 1924 and done mostly under Tagore's participatory supervision. She gives her translation a dialogic, dramatized look to sharpen the opposition between the bigoted orthodoxy of Gora and the enlightened humane and humanistic emotions and feelings of Anandamoyee, the mother. Das observes in conclusion that *Gora* (1910) "is that great work that reveals

Tagore moving away from Hindu Revivalism and Brahmanical orthodoxy towards a Religion of Man. My translation of selected passages underlines these motifs as best as I can."

"Humorous Dialogues on TV Shows: An Effective Tool in English Language Learning" by Kshetrimayum Vijaylakshmi Devi and Rajkumari Ashalata Devi is an excellent paper on learning English as a Second Language using TV shows, films and other resourses not generally used in conventional classroom teaching. The scholars focus on all the academic experts and then use selection from the British Sitcom "Mind Your Language", American Sitcom F.R.I.E.N.D.S. and an interview of the Korean Boy group BTS in the *Ellen Degeneres Show* to reveal how situational comedy can improve both speaking and reading skills of non-native English students. Vijaylakshmi Devi and Ashalata Devi should be congratulated for this exemplary paper. If they teach like this their students should all become adept in speaking, reading and writing English.

Amitava Roy's "My Grandfather BVR: urban historian *per excellence*" gives us his memories of his famous grandfather. BVR was best known for his Jt. Editorship with Amal Home of the CMC Gazette on urban and civic matters, for his special brand of Journalism and for his book, *Old Calcutta Cameos.* This long out-of-print book is being re-printed by Nepal Chandra Ghosh, Proprietor Sahitya Lok (Literary World). Mr Ghosh had requested Amitava Roy to pen a memoir of his famous grandfather as an Introduction or Foreword to this rare book.

Rajkumari Ashalata Devi is Assistant Professor, Department of English and Cultural Studies, Manipur University, has contributed her paper on 'Reconstruction of Distinct Dalit Identity In Bama's KARUKKU' with her research scholar K.Christina Kamei. She also has contributed another paper with her research scholar Kshetrimayum Vijayalakshmi Devi on 'Humorous Dialogues in Television Shows: An Effective Tool in English Language Learning'. These two papers have added new dimension of this journal.

IJCSSS occasionally publishes unpublished verses or short fiction from various parts of the globe. We close this issue with a short poem composed by Pradip Chatterjee in 1987. *Wisdom* will be followed by *Head Against Heart* in our next issue.

Amitava Roy
Bryan Reynolds

Running With The Bard

Stan Dragland

[Professor Dragland was invited to India to present this paper under the auspices of the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India at the British Council, Calcutta in February, 1996. *Running with The Bard* is not only an in-depth study of the place of Shakespeare in the life, work and thought of the Sri Lankan/Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje (especially of Lear and his family as they mix and mingle influence and interanimate the novel *Running in the Family*), it is also a remarkably sensitive exploration of intertexuality in a modernist or rather post-modernist writer, and a creative mediation on how a deeply personal novelist may use a classical frame like Shakespeare to shape and form his work and invest it with archetypal universal resonances.

Stan Dragland (with his wife Melanie) came to India not only to present his paper. He came in quest of the mind-boggling mix of realities and surrealities, illusions and illuminations that make up the contemporary Indian ethos—at once and simultaneously ancient and post-modern. His was a search for both Maya and meaning. His paper too embraces a complex network of quests and voyages : his own quest for the soul of the expatriate writer and man Michael Ondaatje interfused within his works; Ondaatje's quest for a geographical and cultural home in Sri Lanka, Canada and in the world-at-large; Michael's search for his father and his quest for his literary father Shakespeare; Ondaatje's quest for meaning and direction running with and in the family; and relating all his complex web of quests to the reader's quest for meaning in art and life, through Shakespearean, Sri Lankan and Canadian resonances-our search conducted and mediated through the words of an inspired Canadian cogitating on life and literature amongst his 'far-distant-yet-near' Indian family of listeners.–Ed]

Before 1 was asked to speak to the *Shakespeare Society of Eastern India*, I had already been thinking about the Place of Shakespeare in Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*. Ondaatje is a Canadian writer who was born in Sri Lanka when it was still Ceylon and spent the first eleven years of his life there, before moving with his mother, sisters and

brother to England. There he studied *Julius Caesar*, he says, year after year in Grammar School. Perhaps that explains why though he still knows the play pretty much by heart, it will never be necessary to study the place of *Julius Caesar* in the writing of Michael Ondaatje. Ondaatje came to Canada in 1962 to attend Bishop's University and stayed. It could be argued that he is part of the South Asian diaspora in Canada. There are critical books, anthologies, and at least one periodical devoted to a rapidly growing South Asian branch of Canadian literature, which is only one of the sometimes intersecting immigrant literatures of Canada written in both of our official languages. But Ondaatje's success as a Canadian writer predated the outburst of attention to South Asian writing, and Arun Mukherjee has even attacked him for fitting too comfortably into the Canadian literary mainstream.

Running in the Family was Ondaatje's eighth book. Four others have followed. The most recent novel *The English Patient,* won the Booker Prize in 1992. He has published volumes of fiction and poetry in about equal numbers, though some of his books mix the forms. *Running in the Family* contains a few poems as well as prose, but it stands out from all the other books, being a composite memoir of two trips to Sri Lanka taken in 1978 and 1980. The book as a whole is nearer to much of Ondaatje's poetry than to his fiction in thesense that it rises directly out of his own experience, but it's also true that certain obsessive themes in all his writings (possibly even his style and his forms) are set into autobiographical context by *Running In the Family.*

A casual reader of *Running in the Family* hearing of a proposal to enter the text through Shakespeare might wonder how. There are allusions to *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Othello, Hamlet* and *King Lear,* but none of these plays supplies a continuous parallel to Ondaatje's text. When I told Michael Ondaatje what I was doing, he wondered how. So I want to share with you an anecdote about his brief career on the stage that raises serious questions about his memory. He told me this about a week before I left for India.

At Bishop's University, in Lennoxville, Quebec, he said, his drama teacher had cast him in a production of *Billy Budd.* He was assigned a long speech containing the aesthetic core of the piece. On opening night he skipped about 50 lines, effectively gutting the play, and breaking his teacher's heart. This was a man called Arthur Motyer, whom Ondaatje

recalls with great fondness. Motyer must have been a patient man, because Ondaatje got another chance. He was cast as Valentine in *Twelfth Night.* Valentine has a tiny speaking part: a small bit in Act I, scene i, a bit less in Act I, scene iv, and that's it. Arthur Motyer must have felt safe enough. Having made up for the assignment of a bit part by giving Valentine a big entrance through the audience, maybe he felt generous. But he should have thought twice about who he was counting on to put the play into motion. Orsino can't start the action. "If music be the food of love, play on," he is intoning to the musicians, for the benefit of Curio and the "other Lords" who have walked on stage with him. This languid, lovesick man isn't going to start anything.

In *Running in the Family,* Ondaatje suspects that "It is from my mother's side that we got a sense of the dramatic, the tall stories, the determination to now and then hold the floor... The ham in us" (168). Only a sense of the dramatic.Pity. He could have used some aptitude, as well. Ondaatje as Valentine entered Arthur Motyer's production of *Twelfth Night* striding up the aisle through the audience towards the stage where Orsino was waiting to ask him for news of Olivia. From a dramaturgical perspective, this is not only news; it sets up the problem which the rest of the play then sets about solving. Ondaatje didn't say how Arthur Motyer's*Twelfth Night* managed to limp into motion without his help. These trauma stories never have a denouement. All he remembers is arriving on stage with his mind a blank, having drawn an inexplicable amount of attention to a character who says not a word but simply joins the "other Lords" on stage and mingles.

Well, Ondaatje's eclectic running in the literary family brings in J.M. Barrie, Michael Arlen, Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, D.H. Lawrence, Edward Lear, Leonard Woolf, Pablo Neruda, LakdasaWikkremasinha, the ancient anonymous graffiti poets of Sigyria Rock, the modern folk poets of the 1971 Insurgency and others. But the most significant *Running in the Family* intertextsdo turn out to be Shakespearean when the lot have been sifted. The emotional core of the book that my mind most frequently returns to depends on a fascinating reading of the Gloucester-Edgar relationship in *King Lear.* The father-son stresses in Shakespeare's subplot are test patterns for the relationship with an estranged and deceased father that Ondaatje has to invent. And this invention is the sore heart of the book, so the *King Lear* scene is disproportionately important to it.

Michael Ondaatje says in the acknowledgements to *Running in the Family* that his book has a slightly slant relationship with the genre of autobiography. "I must confess," he says, after listing the many friends and relatives who supplied his raw material, "that the book is not history but a portrait or 'gesture'. And if those listed above disapprove of the fictional air 1 apologize and can only say that in Sri Lanka a well-told lie is worth a thousand facts" (206). In fact, the book may be suspect to readers who want their autobiography straight, as some do, even those who understand that no autobiography is free of fiction. But perhaps readers of Shakespeare, noticing Ondaatje's reference to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (and to Camelot) would be inclined to grant *Running In the Family*its outrageous humour, its fantastic, dreamlike, poetic dimension. *Running In the Family* moves towards some searingly painful scenes, then, but it never loses contact with the comic and even magical aspects of a story about a Ceylonese lost generation of parents and relatives, who abdicate responsibility or lose control or both. It moves between Shakespearean extremes of comedy and tragedy.

The unexpected bonus for me in all of this has been a return to Shakespeare texts that 1 haven't looked at for years, and the discovery that Ondaatje's readings have shifted my sense of them, especially *King Lear.* The reflective power, that is, is not all with Shakespeare. One of the many genres mingling in *Running in the Family* is literary criticism, and its legitimacy as such need not be suspect because Ondaatje's analytical takes are personal and highly coloured, even distorted, by the pressure of his own need to "touch [his family] into words" (22). Criticism often looks much thinner than the primary text because passion has been wrung out of it by the time it hits the page. I will share my new sense of *Lear* eventually, though it probably won't be news to members of a Shakespeare Society. I'm out of my depth among you, being an amateur on Shakespeare. But I will say this: I never profess to be anything but an amateur My amateur status is dear to me. I try to keep it at the heart of my profession. Amateurs are animated by love above all, and I am one with you in loving Shakespeare.

Love is what I feel in Ondaatje too—love and deep respect for a literary father. After all, Ondaatje reaches for Shakespeare in a moment of extremes. He calls for help in understanding his own father, for getting a grip on his own life, on 'a childhood I had ignored and not understood" (22), and the help is there. How ironic that a writer with such power to

speak across the centuries, across continents and cultures, should these days sometimes be dismissed as a dead white male.

I have something particular in mind when I use the word love. "Hard language softens" with overuse, Ondaatje says, and "love" is the cliché. It needs some stiffening. I am thinking of an embrace, an intensity of relationship that I would wish to govern everything I do, but which I manage best with respect to literature. "Works of art are of an infinite loneliness," says Rilke, "and with nothing to be so little appreciated as with criticism. Only love can grasp and hold and fairly judge them" (Cummings 7)[1]. I have never taken this as an invitation to critical passivity. It has never suggested to me that I shouldn't bother with criticism because criticism is bound to fail. Many amateurs do resist analysis out of a sentimentality they miscall love. "I can't stand to watch this text I love beng dissected," they say, and the blinds descend over their eyes. No, Rilke is asking critics to lift themselves with love to the level of the text so that analysis may be conducted with passion and with minimum loss. There will always be loss. "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety," wrote Shakespeare of Cleopatra, and the same might be said of him. His writing will never be exhausted. While I don't mean to place the two writers on the same level, there is also more in Ondaatje than a critic will ever "grasp and hold and fairly judge."

Now that I have been teaching and writing for 25 years, I have begun to reflect on the nature of my critical practice. I have begun to fashion a provisional and personal poetics of criticism, and an aspect of this that interests me hugely is the potential for using literary texts as keys to unlock other texts. The gain is, I think, in the kinds of leverage which many critics these days find in theory. I think the motive is similar—to find a productive stance outside the primary text-and the method-like reflecting-is perhaps less distancing.[*] For myself, in the process of writing on a text that lift orstretches me, I often find my mind drawn to clarifying analogies in other primary texts that have meant much to me. A group of such relationships may thicken up into a critical microcosm. Only really

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***** 'This version of a passage in Rilke's Letters to a Young Poet is quoted in e.e. cummings' Six Nonlectures. Perhaps in his own translation, like it better than**,** forinstance, Stephen Mitchell's translation: "Works of art are of aninfinite solitude, and no means of approach isso useless as criticism. Only love can touch and hold them and be fair to them" (23).

important stones and *Zages* seed the mind with growth that blooms at deep need. *King Lear* functions in this way for Ondaatje. That's why I recognize him, behind his storyteller's mask, as a critic.

Running in the Family is a pivotal Ondaatje text because it probes a painful autobiographical point, the estrangement from his alcoholic father, that obliquely haunts much of the work leading up to it. In an early passage of *Running in the Family* a fragile aunt is described as "the minotaur who inhabits the place one had been years ago..."(25), but the real minotaur is Mervyn Ondaatje. He is the monster, after all, if only when drunk, and he is the one whom his son must somehow confront to gather some clues about himself, about "the anger and argument which I see in myself, my brother, and two sisters" (168). In an early poem called "White Dwarfs," Ondaatje asks,

> *Why do I love most among my heroes those who sail to that perfect edge where there is no social fuel release of sandbags to understand their altitude*

The best "answer" to this question may be *Running in the Family.*

For most of his life, Ondaatje's father had a privacy into which he retreated. Sometimes it showed up in behaviour that was merely erratic and inexplicable, often with the charm of eccentricity that infuses surprise into a predictable world. Sometimes it presented a terrifying threat to those around him, especially his children. Sometimes, particularly when he was lost to alcohol, it flung him into wildly subversive public roles. "Gentle and humorous when sober," Ondaatje says, "he changed utterly and would do anything to get alcohol" (58)."Changed utterly"—you can almost hear an echo of Yeats, "A terrible beauty is born" (203). At other times, especially in his last years, Ondaatje's father was trapped in a cell of his own mind. Sailing to "that perfect edge/ where there is no social fuel."

Ondaatje began *Running in the Family* in the early 1970's, at least ten years before his memoir appeared. As he imagines the dilation/ contraction of his father's mind in its last days, in a poem called "Letters and Other Worlds," the social "edge" is transformed from noun into verb:

> *his heart widening and widening and widening to all manner of change in his children and friends while he himself edged into the terrible acute hatred of his own privacy....*

Since the heroes of Ondaatje's writings are all excessive, often larger than life, all of them walking a knife edge between order and chaos, all spilling over into temporary or permanent loss of control, it's tempting to see them all as versions of Ondaatje's father. Why does Ondaatje write again and again towards this jubilee of madness? To spin a web of fiction over a wound that cannot be closed? Being orphaned from a father, suffering that awful loss, is that what fructifies him into words?

These intolerable lacunae must be understood, even if the mind has to counterfeit an explanation. But "loss" doesn't cover it; for Ondaatje loss is only part of the pain. Of his father's turbulent last years, Ondaatje says (the urgency intensified by an uncharacteristic address to the reader), "you must understand all this was happening while his first family was in England or Canada or Colombo totally unaware of what was happening to him. That would always be the curse on us, the guilt we would be left with" (199).You didn't abandon us, Ondaatje is saying; we abandoned you. He is stepping into the role of the "marble-hearted" unnurturing children of *King Lear.* He feels "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is/ To [be] a thankless child." (I, iv, 279-80)

> *No, this is not rational. Love is not rational.*
> *Lovers and madmen have such seething*
> *Brains,*
> *Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend*
> *More than cool reason ever comprehends.*
> *The lunatic, the lover, and the poet*
> *Are of imagination all compact.*
> *(A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i , 4-8)*

And we are not looking at the grasping, green-eyed kind of love. No amateur psychologising over *Running in the Family* should ever forget Doris Gratien, Ondaatje's mother. Looking at his mother, and at Lalla, his mother's mother, Ondaatje sees only love and generosity. He sees them both having huge compassionate hearts that never even considered revenge or small-mindedness, "both howling and wheezing with laughter over the frailest joke, both carrying their own theatre on their backs" (125). When Ondaatje won the Booker Prize for *The English Patient,* he used the funds to establish The Doris Gartien Prize for emerging Sri Lankan writers. Doris Gratien was not a problem; she was the continuing parent, the familial anchor, and there was no withdrawal anywhere in her character.

Running in the Family is a tribute to her theatrical solidity, but it was written to grasp the father.

Robin Blaser says in his essay, "The Recovery of the Public World," that "The world is never separately-by simplicity's trick-social, political, artistic, or sacred, but, rather, it is made up of an entanglement of discourses having to do with men, women, earth, and heaven." It is tempting and dangerous to go for the simplicity, to lose the entanglement by concentrating on this discourse or that. "The realism of those separate discourses, each in turn Blaser says "claims the whole reality and thus the world is maimed" (20). Thus, also, the text is lost, when criticism reduces multiplicity to discussable units. When it pulls out only one 'wild thread of the sarong'' (110) which is *Running in the Family.* At the risk of straying from Shakespeare, I must say that no full narrative of the formation of Michael Ondaatje can consider only the father, only the two parents, and ignore all the textures of Sri Lanka that are woven into his book.

Ondaatje's heroes are not only private, on the edge; they are alsopreternaturally sensitive,almost inhumanly alert to minute nuances in the worldaround them. Does this have anything to do withbeingbrought up in anenvironment so 'thick with event" (70) that it creates adaily sensual onslaught? "One morning I would wake and just smell things for the whole day,it was sorich I had to select senses" (70-71).Doesthishave anything to do with the formation of an often astonishingly concentrated andsensual literary style? Does it explain Ondaatje**'s** characteristic multiple layering of narrative and form? One of his alter egos is the jazzplayer, Buddy Bolden:

> *Listening to him was like talking to Coleman. You were both changing direction with every sentence, sometimes in the middle, using each other as a springboard through the dark. You were moving so fast it was unimportant to finish and clear everything. He would be describing something in 27 ways. There was pain and gentleness everything; jammed into each number. (Slaughter 37)*

I don't want myquestions answered. Answers are often too solid and declarative to respond with delicacy to a world, a life, a text so intricate that nothing will ever completely disentangle the strands. But I am asking "family" questions. Dog,snake, wild boar, rain, wind, rock: everything in

Sri Lanka is family, in an anthropomorphosis which Don Mckay calls "an extra metaphorical stretch and silliness of language as it moves toward the other, dreaming its body" (27). When a recording made to catch the weep, weeping of peacocks in a Sri Lankan night is replayed in Canada, Ondaatje hears the frogs that he missed at the time, "all those sweet loud younger brothers of the night"(136).

Ondaatje's poem called ''All Along the Mazinaw,'' addresses that wonderful eastern Ontario rockface as a woman whose siblings he knows:

O yes I saw your dear sisters too
Before this afternoon's passion
Those depot creek nights when they
Unpacked their breasts
Serious and full of the fever of loon
for whoever stumbled
young onto the august
country waters, (Secular Love 99)

These extended family passions, these loves—they help to join Ondaatje's new world to his old. "Stone mermaid/stone heart," he says to Sigyria Rock in Sri Lanka

I bring you a flute
from the throat
of a loon (Running 94)

One section of *Running in the Family* is entitled "The Karapothas." The word sounds vaguely like an archaic name for an archipelago, something like Andrew Marvell's "Bermoothes," in "To His Coy Mistress," but it's actually a complex metaphor for imperialist tourism :

Ceylon always did have too many foreigners ...the "Karapothas" as my niece calls them— the beetles with white spots who never grew ancient here, who stepped in and admired the landscape, disliked the "inquisitive natives" and left. They came originally and overpowered the land obsessive for something as delicate as the smell of cinnamon" (80).

The Ondaatje family itself blends the bloodliness of many of the invaders. Ondaatje's Ceylon is a subversively fluid entity which maintains

itself by folding into itself strains of all who come and go. It's also unwelcoming to foreigners from northern climes: Ondaatje quotes Robert Knox, Edward Lear, D.H.Lawrence, and Leonard Woolf, travelers who have left unflattering reports of Ceylon. In fact, in "The Karapothas," Ondaatje presents Ceylon with Shakespeare's help as a destination that Westerners can never really reach:

> *The leap from one imagination to the other can hardly be made; no more than Desdemona could understand truly the Moor's military exploits. We own the country we grow up in, or we are aliens and invaders. Othello's talent was a decorated sleeve she was charmed by. This island was a paradise to be sacked. (81)*

Where is Ondaatje's imagination in this schema? It's either bestriding both sides of the unleapable abyss, or smack in it, an uncomfortable position either way. He is Sri Lankan and he is Canadian. He cannot unequivocally embrace Sri Lanka or be embraced by it. As for Canada, the sentence about "aliens and invaders" echoes Margaret Atwood's famous overstatement that nobody actually belongs in Canada : "We are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here: the country is too big for anyone to inhabit completely, and in the parts unknown to us we move in fear, exiles and invaders" (62). "I am the foreigner," says Ondaatje at the beginning of "The Karapothas." "I am the prodigal who hates the foreigner"(79). Extremes of tropical heat and frozen snow (from the thread of references to Canada in *Running in the Family)* are climatic markers of Ondaatje's mongrel makeup.

The word "mongrel" may seem disrespectful, but Ondaatje has adopted it for himself. The word, or variations on it, appears often in his work, and not always applied to the dogs he loves to write about. Ondaatje is a film-maker with four films to his credit. His film company is called Mongrel Films. In the late sixties he was the publisher of Mongrel Broadsides. I think he uses the word with more irony than Salman Rushdie does in calling *The Satanic Verses* "a love-song to our mongrel selves" (394), but Ondaatje does seem at times to be revelling in the kind of cultural mixture that Rushdie celebrates. "The *Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling," Rushdie says, "the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies,

songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Melange,* hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world"* (394). By this definition, newness had certainly entered the world of NuwaraEliya, Ceylon, by the nineteen-twenties and thirties. Of Sri Lankan interconnection at that time, Ondaatje says, "Everyone was vaguelyrelated and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back manygenerations" (41). A reprise of his motif draws names from both *Running in the Family* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to introduce a composite character who is both male and female, mortal and fairy, English, Greek and Sri Lankan. This is from "Thanikama," the section late in the book in which Ondaatje imagines a day in the alcoholic life of his solitary father and into which he condenses motifs from all parts of *Running in the Family:*

> *He saw himself with the bottle. Where was his book. He had lost it. What was the book. It was not Shakespeare, not those plays of love he wept over too easily. With dark blue bindings. You creaked them open and stepped into a roomful of sorrow. A mid-summer night's dream. All of them had moved at times with an ass's head. Titania Dorothy Hilden Lysander de Saram, a mongrel collection part Sinhalese part Dutch part Tamil part ass moving slowly in the forest with foolish and serious obsessions. No, he looked around the bare room, don't talk to me about Shakespeare, about "green hats." (188-189).*

Running in the Family is itself a fluid composite, full of mixtures, some benign, some malignant. Racial and cultural mixture is mildly amusing, but otherwise neither here nor there. Generic impurity—myth rubbing elbows with realism—is a source of surprise and vitality. Mixture of the tourist and the prodigal is more problematical, because it has to do with truncated belonging, with difficulties of identity. And the mixture of tragedy and comedy is too near the split in Mervyn Ondaatje to be at all comfortable to watch. His escapades—hiding stark naked in a railway tunnel, commandeering a train—are comedy with a terribly dark edge His life was a terrifying comedy," Ondaatje says in "Letters and other Worlds." "Black blooms and it is purple", (114) says Christopher Smart in "Jubilate Agno," and a gorgeous bruise forms in the reader's mind. A sensitive

witty, lovable man has plunged into chaos, hasshattered his life and lost his family. The gap between father and children is apparentlyunbridgeable, but the survivors must somehow bridge it. The father must be sought, learned almost from scratch, and then embraced whole. His story has been running wild and invisible in the veins of his children. His unsatisfied spirit is haunting them as surely as it haunts the house at Kegalle in the form of a grey cobra (99). The father with whom Ondaatje lived for almost eleven years, frightening and loving by turns, alternately theatrical and silent, is a little like Lear without the royalty.

Much of the intensity of *King Lear* is in the painful relationships between fathers and their children. Perhaps a writer naturally turns to such a play for guidance through the maze of his relationship with his own father. The parallels are inexact, of course. Lear sends his own loving daughter away; Gloucester is tricked into alienating his true son. Ondaatje's mother endured the extremes of her husband for fourteen years before she took the children and left.

In "Thanikama," Ondaatje's father is trapped in "the room of sorrow." He is trapped in the nightmare or mad phase of tragedy. For him, there is no moving on. "Letters and Other Worlds" imagines his moving further into entrapment in a narrower space yet, in his own mind. It remains for his son to complete the pattern in the only way he can: vicariously, posthumously. Only artificially, in his own words, can he turn the wheel of plot towards resolution. The son knows how the story should finish; his reading of Shakespeare has told him how. Which brings us to the really important evocation of Shakespeare in *Running in the Family.* The section entitled "Blind harm" in which Ondaatje writes himself and his siblings into the last moments of a Shakespeare Play, *Hamlet* or *King Lear,* is one of many metafictional moments in his book:

> *During certain hours, at certain years in our lives, we see ourselves as remnants from the earlier generations that were destroyed. So our job becomes to keep peace withenemy camps, eliminate the chaos at the end of Jacobean tragedies, and with "the mercy of distance" write thehistories.*
>
> *Fortinbras. Edgar. Christopher, my sisters, Wendy, myself. I think all of our lives have been terribly shaped by what went on before us. And why of*

> *Shakespeare's cast of characters do I remain most curious about Edgar ? Who if I look deeper into the metaphor, torments his father over an imaginary cliff.*
>
> *Words such as love, passion, duty, are so continually used they grow to have no meaning—except as coins or weapons. Hard language softens. I never knew what my father felt of these "things." My loss was that I never spoke to him as an adult. Was he locked in the ceremony of being "a father"? He died before I even thought of such things.*
>
> *I long for the moment in the play where Edgar reveals himself to Gloucester and it never happens. Look I am the son who has grown up. I am the son you have made hazardous, who still loves you. I am now part of an adult's ceremony, but I want to say I am writing this book about you at a time when I am least sure about such words...Give me your arm. Let go my hand. Give me your arm. Give the word. "Sweet Marjoram"...a tender herb. (179-180)*

Since Ondaatje's plot, which is also his life, cannot be resolved except by literary means, he heightens the parallel with the Gloucester subplot by ignoring the reconciliation that does take place, offstage. Edgar tells Albany and Edmund of his days in disguise, and then narrates Gloucester's death:

> *Never (O fault!) reveal'd myself unto him, Until some half hour past, when I was arm'd, Not sure, though hoping, of this good success, I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last told him of our pilgrimage. But his flaw'd heart— (Alack, too weak the conflict to support!) 'Twixt two exttemes of passion, joy and grief Burst smilingly, (V, iii, 193-200)*

The end of "Blind Faith" leaps from Edgar, Give me thy arm" (IV, i, 79), to Gloucester, Let go my hand" (IV, vi, 28), to Edgar, "Give me your arm" (IV, vi, 64), to Lear, "Give the word" (IV, vi, 92) to Edgar, "Sweet marjoram" (IV- vi, 93). Ondaatje is addressing his father in Shakespeare's words, not the first time that *Running in the Family* and Shakespeare havebeen layered together. Two fathers and two sons are united in gently physical and verbal contact. "Sweet marjoram," tastefully and mellifluously

capping the exchanges, is somehow much more than a friendly password to offer a lovable mad old king. It's also tender filial love and healing. Art has transformed the monstrous child into the loving son. The "serpent's tooth" is drawn.

"Blind Faith" is about denouement, but *Running in the Family* doesn't end here. The ending is played out over several more sections, the most important being "Thanikama." "Thanikama" is a free-standing fiction, a short story, in fact. It is *Running in the Family* boiled down like the sap of the Sugar Maple tree; 25 or 30 gallons of sap to make one gallon of maple syrup. "Thanikama" gathers together many threads in a satisfying summary of the book, but it ends neither happily nor conclusively. Ondaatje knows to his chagrin that fiction can be a poor substitute for life. The final pages of his book are rife with loose ends. One section is an anthology of comments about his father, raw material offered raw. "There is so much to know and we can only guess," Ondaatje says. "Guess around him. To know him from these stray actions I am told about by those who loved him. And yet, he is still one of those books we long to read whose pages remain uncut" (200).

It's interesting that *King Lear* is so active in Ondaatje's imagination, that its conventional pattern of closure is so appealing to him, because Ondaatje has always been writing out of the so-called process aesthetic that is identified with postmodernism. The fragmentary progression, the generic instability, the open ending of *Running in the Family* are characteristic of his work. Lifting the narrator's mask in his novel *In the Skin of a Lion* he quotes some lines at the heart of his aesthetic: "Only the best art can order the chaotic tumble of events. Only the best can realign chaos to suggest both the chaos and order it will become." Then he comments: "The first sentence of every novel should be: "Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human" (146). Postmodernism is often felt to be cool, distant, relativistic, nihilistic. But here is a writer who plunges into the chaos of our time, not out of appetite for chaos but because he must. May be it is an accident that he has his pulse on the chaos of our time, because he seems first to have picked it up from his father in a remote corner of the British Empire in a privileged class in which a reader might sometimes be seen making her leisurely way through a novel, slicing the pages open as she goes. Certainly he is nostalgic for the old comfortable relation between life and literature.

No wonder the literary and artistic past is so alive in Ondaatje. No wonder Shakespeare can still serve as a model, even though Ondaatje feels he has to loosen the old patterns to reflect contemporary life. The same tumble of order and chaos that fascinates Ondaatje is palpable in *King Lear,* though he loves the subversive side of mischief and misrule too much to quash it as Shakespeare does at the end of his plays. Chaos no longer represents evil and a threat to the entire social and political fabric because the macrocosm does no longer seem to be resonating with the affairs of a single tragic hero. But this sort of contrastive thinking begins to turn the interpretive tables, so that *Running in the Family* might serve as a new entry into *King Lear.* What do I see in *King Lear* by running it through Ondaatje?

Well, *Running in the Family* is all about theatre. Everybody in the family is theatrical. Even Mervyn Ondaatje in his cups is a theatre out of control. Theatre in the book is associated with transformation, with moving out of one's own identity, whether for serious or playful purposes. Theatre is an art of metamorphosis. In this sense, Ceylon itself in *Running in the Famly*is historically, geographically, politically theatrical, a shape changer with a population of shape changers. This instability has its dangerous extremes, but it's never dull. That is also wonderfully true of great Lear. Not to minimize his many serious faults, but his self-pitying rages are wonderfully and unpredictably inventive. His madness is full of fictions. One index of the greatness of Shakespeare's characterization is the greatness of Lear's emotional range, from heaven-shaking tempest to eye-of-the-hurricane calm. Yes, the State requires that balance to be restored to this erratic vortex of plentitude, but Lear's madness is magnificent!

Of the major virtuous characters, only Cordelia is never theatrical She is one of the few major characters of whom it can be said thatfixity is virtue. She is what she is-true-and she does not change as others do. Others must change in self-defence, of course. Except in the case of The Fool, whose occupation demands the mercurial and whose nonsense is sublime, the changes are not permanent; they are theatrical. Even plain Kent counterfeits an identity that will permit him to stay near his master. But Edgar, the character with whom Ondaatje most identifies, turns out to bea master player on "this great stage of fools." The imagination that creates Edgar would have demonstrated its greatness had itcreated nothing else. What the plot requires of Edgar is a disguise; what Edgar delivers isa series of virtuoso performances, as Shakespeare's creative energy floods

the banks of plot. Poor Tom, tormented onthe heath by the Foul Fiend, is not merely a disguise for Edgar. He is a fully realized character whom Edgar has somehow spun, whether from his innards or from observation—who knows? He iscertainly a much better Tom o' Bedlam than his brother, who gives the role a try in Act 1 (ii, 135-6). Edgar also flits in and out of character to comment on his roles in asides to the audience. He is theatrical and meta-theatrical at once.

Edger plays two other roles in company with his father. He maintains his performance of Poor Tom in the face of his grief at the fall of Lear but the sight of his father "poorly led" causes his mask to slip. "Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow," he says. He is not Edgar on the way to Dover, but he is no longer quite poor Tom. "Dressed like a peasant", and speaking "in better phrase and matter than [he] didn't (IV,vi, 9), he creates a cliff of words to Convince his father that he is "Now within a Foot/Of th' extreme verge" (IV, vi, 25-26). Then in the space of seconds he becomes the onlooker who has seen Gloucester pitch over the cliff and land unharmed at the bottom. Now pure poetry is required to convince Gloucester that he has survived a fall, to show the audience the cliff he has fallen from:

EDG. Alive or dead?—
Ho, you, Sir! friend! Hear you, sir? speak! Thus
might he pass indeed; yet he revives.— What are
you, sir?
GLOU.Away, and let me die.
EDG.Hadst thou been aught but
goss'mer, feathers, air,
(So many fathom down precipitating),
Thou' dil'st shiver like an egg; but thou
dost breathe,
Hast heavy substance, bleed'st not,
speak'st, art sound.
Ten masts at each make not the altitude
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell.
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.
GLOU. But have I fall' n or no?
EDG. From the dread summit of this
chalky bourn.

Look up a-height, the shrill-gorg'd lark so far
Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.
(IV, vi, 45-59)

Edgar has three more roles to play, one low and two high. First he is the rustic, defending his father from Oswald with a sword and an outrageous accent. Then he is an anonymous gentleman delivering an anonymous letter to Albany. Then he is the disguised knight who answers the trumpet's call to denounce his brother as a traitor and to slay him for proof. In the ethos of the play, disguise is either an evil or a defense against evil. A State in equilibrium, a psyche in order, requires no kickchawses, except from a licens'd fool. When Edgar removes his disguise after revenging himself and his father upon Edmund, he puts on the serious head that will be required of a head of State. But what a performance he has given! He has displayed resourcefulness worthy of another distinguished shape changer, the Man of Many Wiles who fooled his way home to Ithaca from Troy.

And what a performance Shakespeare has put on !

"[T]those things do best please me/That befall prepost'rously," says Puck (111, ii, 120-121). At times it seems as though Puck is loose and undirected in *Running in the Family.* You could easily see Puck attending Lalla, the outrageous magical grandmother with the "chameleon nature" (124). Some Puckish spirit is abroad even at inappropriate times, or the funerals in the book, including Mervyn Ondaatje's, would not be tragicomedies (197). But Puck is all light and air, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*itself. Something darker, something heavier and drenched with tears, is felt even at the beginning of *Running in the Family,* and it predominates in the latter stages of the book. Since the comic and tragic strains of the book cannot be disentangled, the spirit of the book must be personified by someone who is honest, sincere, true, and capable of that limited human form of metamorphosis, acting. Ondaatje doesn't emblematize Edgar, but there he is: not only the loyal and responsible son but a theatrically accomplished shapechanger. To nominate Edgar as the dynamic spirit of *Running in the Family* is to squeeze out of *King Lear* a significance that Ondaatje did not, but I think it takes us under the skin of his book to say that he might have.

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The concept of Kshatriyadharma: warriors and violence in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*

Papia Mitra

Ramayana and *Mahabharata*, the two great epics of India, centre primarily around a great war each: that is the most well-known feature regarding them. But they also are primary religious texts for all that teach us about code of conduct in society and our relationship with the wider universe. Nowadays the verse *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma* "Non-violence is the best religion" is quoted repeatedly to prove that Hinduism shuns violence as much as Buddhism and Jainism. Yet the epics (and it is significant that *Mahabharata* is called the fifth veda) focuses on the actions and duties of the warrior class.

It is not that Hinduism insists on day to day violence. After all, human society depends on mutual co-operation and exchange in order to simply survive as a race; and naturally civilization of any kind would be impossible without communities following a set of regulations, whether they are nomadic or settled. But any civilization and accompanying culture to flourish require stability and peace. It seems axiomatic therefore that non-violence is the prime condition of a happy society. Yet in real life we find from the dawn of civilization human tribes had always gone to war over resources and when States came into being ultimately most conflicts among them have been settled by war. In individual life too violence had always been with us, whether it is to inflict or check aggression by citizens against another or in the power of the State to inflict violence on citizens.

Against this universal background, it is not surprising that Hinduism, though emphasizing non-violence has never shied away from violence, neither in theory nor in practice. *Rigvedas* themselves mention at least two mighty battles among competing tribes and are throughout filled with images of warfare and violence, literal or metaphorical. The very existence of a social category called "kshatriya," contradicts the notion of a

completely pacifist society. They were the warrior class and inevitably the ruling class because of the force they wielded. Non-violence and compassion are obligatory for all dharmic humans, yet the ksatriya must use violence as a tool if he is to fulfill his proper dharma.

A kshatriya is a person who possesses "kshatra" or 'authority'. Rulers and the aristocratic class come from this "varna." So they are expected to follow their kshatriya dharma. It can be summed up by quoting the *Gita* which says, "The Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity and also not fleeing from battle, generosity and lordliness are the duties of Kshatriyas, born of (their own) nature" (18:43). The very term dharma implies that their violence is sanctioned legally, socially and morally. One such use of violence is Dandaniti. The king has to deal out justice for those who commit transgressions against other people. But this system of legal justice is based on **danda** or the force the State wields. It is widely accepted that the danda is necessary :

> "The whole world is kept in order by punishment, for a guiltless man is hard to find; through fear of punishment the whole world yields the enjoyments (which it owes).
>
> The gods, the Danavas, the Gandharvas, the Rakshasas, the bird and snake deities even give the enjoyments (due from them) only, if they are tormented by (the fear of) punishment.
>
> All castes (varna) would be corrupted (by intermixture), all barriers would be broken through, and all men would rage (against each other) in consequence of mistakes with respect to punishment.
>
> But where Punishment with a black hue and red eyes stalks about, destroying sinners, there the subjects are not disturbed, provided that he who inflicts it discerns well". [*Manusamhita* VII, 17—25]

Thus danda is identified with kingship itself and as the sustainer of dharma in all three worlds. It is true that safeguards were laid down. Danda is not to be inflicted indiscriminately, but with wisdom and justice:

> "They declare that king to be a just inflicter of punishment, who is truthful, who acts after due consideration, who is wise, and who knows (the respective value of) virtue, pleasure, and wealth.
>
> A king who properly inflicts (punishment), prospers with respect to (those) three (means of happiness); but he who is voluptuous, partial, and deceitful will be destroyed, even through the (unjust) punishment (which he inflicts)." [*Manusamhita* VII, 26-28]

> "A king who punishes those who do not deserve it, and punishes not those who deserve it, brings great infamy on himself and (after death) sinks into hell". [*Manusamhita* VIII, 128]

The emphasis on danda and the need to inflict it judiciously demonstrates that our ancestors were not optimistic believers in natural goodness of human beings or in any 'natural' rights and laws in society. Realistically they assumed that it is the naked force of danda that alone enforces obedience to law and can maintain dharma. Thus State Ideology was structured on power. The alternative was assumed to be *matsanya* or anarchy where the stronger would roast the weaker, like fish on a spit.

However a proper kshatriya king had another duty that is far more troubling to the modern conscience, the duty of war. Ideally speaking war should be defensive, the king going to battle only to protect his people from those who arouse fear. The same model is reflected on the divine plane. Indra is not only the king of gods but also a warrior who kills his enemies by hook or by crook; in fact, he is depicted as the war-leader of the gods whose primary duty it is to protect his subjects from encroachers of the heavens. The earthly king follows the same path. So far good. However, it is a truism that any king who wants to be remembered as great must be aggressive. The most celebrated hero-kings in recorded history — from Alexander to Kanishka to Chandragupta to Rajendra Chola to Napoleon— are also great conquerors. Hindu Shastras accept it as normal that kings, when they are strong and their subjects contented, should go on offensive war even if not directly threatened.:

> "What he has not (yet) gained, let him seek (to gain) by (his) army; what he has gained, let him protect by careful attention; what he has protected, let him augment by (various modes of) increasing it; and what he has augmented, let him liberally bestow (on worthy men).
>
> Let him be ever ready to strike, his prowess constantly displayed, and his secrets constantly concealed, and let him constantly explore the weaknesses of his foe."
>
> "Of him who is always ready to strike, the whole world stands in awe; let him therefore make all creatures subject to himself even by the employment of force. "[*Manusamhita* VII,. 101-103].

The reason is thus not spiritual but mundane, pragmatic and political.

It was the goal of every king to be hailed as '*rajchakrobartin'* or king of kings. It is indeed the duty of a kshatriya king to do so, for only in his

display of his valour can he prove his worth. *Ashwamedha yagna* was held to be a righteous, even religious goal for rulers. A horse was sent to wander and claim any territory it went over and the claim was backed up by the army — there is no instance of any dharma involved except that the dharma of a Kshatriya is to fight. True this did not mean that there was bloody war every time; if a king allowed the horse to travel through his territory without hindrance then he is agreeing to be a vassal and pay tribute. But it did mean that a war is not always defensive. Interestingly we find that Ashwamedha yagna was done by both Rama and Yuddhishtir after the great battles with their enemies were over. It is because the yagna of expansion was their duty as kshatriya kings. Without *digvijaya* or world-conquest one cannot call oneself a proper kshatriya king.

Of course the warriors are not dharmically permitted to do whatever they liked. They are supposed not to kill sages, women and children and not to use deceitful tricks in battle but fight fairly; a warrior will go to hell if he breaks any of these codes. But as we know from the epics themselves, the rules were broken if one party was more determined to win than follow norms. When we look at the epics the theme of kshatriya valour is emphasized again and again. A kshatriya is a warrior and his business is to be a hero on the battlefield. Yet that is not all. Ksatriya violence must operate within an established framework. How to perform it properly is a running theme in both epics. However while *Ramayana* is clear and without any doubts on this score, *Mahabharata* is riddled with doubts and anguish. Since the epics are too vast in scope, I will discuss only a brief outline focusing on violence inherent in kshatriyadharma as demonstrated in the two texts.

In *Ramayana*, the epynomous hero is always projected as the ideal kshatriya. Even before he became a god he is *Maryada Purushottam* and being a kshatriya who is willing to use violence to protect what he thought as his possessions or honour is a very important aspect of it. The young prince is reared to be a warrior. As he grew up he became skilled in riding a horse, driving a chariot, mounting an elephant and an excellent archer. (*Adiparva, 18*). That is why Vishwamitra came to ask Rama to fight the rakhshasas when he is only fifteen. Rama accepts it as his duty without fear and shows his prowess by successfully killing the rakhshasas. When it is proposed he be crowned king, the poet stresses that Rama held kshatriyadharma as the best and thought that following it he will gain highest heavens. (*Ayodhyakand 1.16*). It is unnecessary to repeat the well-

known story of the epic. But what is obvious is that Rama spends his life in a series of battles with one foe after another. He does not display any repugnance at the thought of bloodshed. On the contrary the text always stress that his cause is righteous. As a result the violence he inflicts is good. Valmiki informs us very early in the epic that the world is imperiled by an evil rakhshasas —who, by means of violence and magical spells, threaten the stability and well-being of the three worlds. At the top of this pyramid of villains is Ravana, who has come to represent the personification of evil. Rama was born to combat these evils. It is assumed from the first that his methods will be armed struggle and such use of violence as needed.

What is significant is that Rama himself has no doubt about the path he treads. For example in the beginning of *Aranya Kanda*, the seers begged Ram to protect them from rakshasas and he agreed. The sages have renounced violence themselves and now find they are helpless against rakshasa depredations. So it falls to a ksatriya to use violence to allow the sages to go on with their non-violent life. Sita however urged that since they were living like those on the path to *Vanaprastha* they should follow the principles of non-injury to all. Rama's answer is that a kshatriya wields his weapons to rescue the distressed and prevent the helpless from oppression. In other words, he doesnot regard coming to the forest as fulfilling the conditions of vanaprastha because fundamentally, his profession is that of kshatra. Throughout the text this belief by Rama never falters. The rakhshasas by attacking the peaceful rishis and destroying their altars have used unsanctioned violence. Rama's action of killing them is guided by right intent — protection of the helpless— and therefore good.

Similarly, Ravana's unrighteousness is stressed repeatedly. He is a great warrior himself and he had made his kingdom prosperous and well-governed. Yet he is ruled by his appetites instead of dharma. He had kidnapped Sita and refused to give her back though she herself wants nothing to do with him. The epic describes three councils he holds about the war with Rama. In the first Vivishana tells Ravana that Rama is blameless and so Sita should be returned in order to avert war. In the second council Malayavan argues that since Rakshasas are losing it is better to stop the war. The third instance is that of Kumbhakarna chastising Ravana for the wicked deed that set the war in motion. Kumbhakarna observes that Ravana had been selfish and shortsighted; blinded by *kama*, he has waged a war whose cause is not connected to dharma or the welfare

of the kingdom at large. Rama by contrast is not waging war for his own selfish desires or petty gain alone but also to uphold dharma. It is here that the story behind his birth becomes interesting. The gods had begged Visnu to rescue them from the rakshasas and so Visnu had incarnated himself as Rama. He had chosen to be born in a kshatriya household as a kshatriya. He could have taken birth as a Brahmin or Vaisya or Sudra and used peaceful means or gained power through tapasya/austerities to stop his enemies. But he chooses to be born a kshatriya, a warrior, because it is the duty of the kshatriya to inflict violence.

> As *maryada purushottam* or the Ideal Hero there are many aspects to Rama's character of course. Valmiki had asked Narada, Who at present in this world is alike crowned with qualities, and endowed with prowess, knowing duty, and grateful, and truthful, and firm in vow,-who is qualified by virtue of his character, and who is ever studious of the welfare of all creatures ? Who is learned, hath studied society, and knoweth the art of pleasing his subjects ? And who alone is ever lovely to behold ? Who hath subdued his heart, and controlled his anger, is endowed with personal grace, and devoid of malice; and who, in battle, do even the gods, fear?

Rama is the dutiful son, husband, friend and king who never swerves from the path of what he considers to be virtue. But first and foremost Rama is a warrior prince and the epic explicitly states that it is permissible for ksatriyas to use violence to cleanse the world of adharmik people. But also, as the ideal kshatriya he does not inflict physical violence on those who are regarded by the code as 'abadhya' or "unkillable" like children and women.

Ramayana is a simpler text in the sense that good and evil are clearly demarcated. But *Mahabharata* is one long struggle to understand what a kshatriya's dharma should actually entail. The heroes are kshatriyas and they inflict violence on enemies but they are also troubled whether the violence they inflict is righteous. This is made all the more perplexing to the readers as well because of how events transpire. We are told by Vyasa that the great war is by Krishna's design so that earth is rid of the double burden of overpopulation and wickedness. But it is also brought about by actions of numerous people. Here again we have two sides, the righteous Pandavas and the unrighteous Kauravas. But the problem is the Kauravas follow kshatriya dharma as much as the Pandavas do, and even more chivalrously to boot. Both parties are kshatriyas and therefore committed to using violence.

The Pandavas and Kaurava princes are both brought up not just to know statecraft but also be great warriors. The enmity of the two sides, as we know, led them to constantly wage war against each other which finally culminates in the Great War. But before that both sides had already established their own empires, in Indraprastha and Hastinapur respectively. After establishing the city Indraprastha, Yudhisthira – who is dharmaraja or virtue incarnate the archetype of the just king — wishes to perform a *Rajasuya yagna* which will confer the title of samrat or emperor on him. Krishna himself is the advisor and to help the Pandavas he kills Jarasandha and Sisupala. Both killings naturally have a backstory and are also placed in a larger moral context of getting rid of unrighteous rulers. But what is to be noted here is that Krishna chooses to employ violence rather than change their minds which he can by his divine power. That is why he also tells the Pandavas that if he had been present at the dice scene he would have counseled Dhritarastra:

> "And, O foremost of kings, If he had rejected my gentle counsels offered as medicine, then, O best of the Bharata race, I would have compelled him by force ! And if those who wait at his court, professing to be his friends but in reality his foes, had supported him, then I would have slain them all, along with those gamblers, there present !" (*Arjunabhigamana Parva*, section 13) The point is Krishna himself is also a kshatriya and as such he behaves as a warrior would. He might be the God, but in his human incarnation he had chosen to be born into a kshatriya family and have accepted their code of conduct.

In his dealings with Draupadi for example we see both sides. During the *vastraharaan* scene Draupadi prays to Krishna as the God. He fulfills her prayers by making her robes endless, that never disappear. Yet during their forest exile he vows to Draupadi that he will avenge her:

> O fair lady, the wives of those with whom thou art angry, shall weep even like thee, beholding their husbands dead on the ground, bathed in torrents of blood and their bodies covered with the arrows of Arjuna! Weep not, radiant one, for I will exert to the utmost of my power for the sons of Pandu ! I promise thou shalt (once more) be the Queen of kings ! The heavens might fall, or the Himavat might split, the earth might be rent, or the waters of the ocean might dry up, but my words shall never be futile! ((*Arjunabhigamana Parva*, section 12)

Here Krishna is responding not as the compassionate God of devotional theology but as a kshatriya should — meting out violence to evildoers and avenging the dishonor done to a woman, specially one who is a friend.

The night before the war begins Yuddhisthira is beset with doubts. He worries how they can fight with their honoured elders and teachers and what kind of victory could be achieved by killing those they themselves honour. This is the same question asked by Arjuna at the beginning of the battle at Kurukshetra. Krishna's famous answer in the *Gita* is to recall Arjuna to warrior ethics :

> Considering also your duty as a warrior you should not waver like this. Because there is nothing more auspicious for a warrior than a righteous war. Only the fortunate warriors, O Arjuna, get such an opportunity for an unsought war that is like an open door to heaven. If you will not fight this righteous war, then you will fail in your duty, lose your reputation, and incur sin. People will talk about your disgrace forever. To the honored, dishonor is worse than death. The great warriors will think that you have retreated from the battle out of fear. Those who have greatly esteemed you will lose respect for you. Your enemies will speak many unmentionable words and scorn your ability. What could be more painful to you than this? You will go to heaven if killed in the line of duty, or you will enjoy the kingdom on the earth if victorious. Therefore, get up with a determination to fight, O Arjuna. Treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss, and victory and defeat alike, engage yourself in your duty. By doing your duty this way you will not incur sin. (2:31—38)

There has been much objection to the ethics of this advice but at heart it is really simple. Arjuna is a kshtriya and as such his duty in this world is to fight his enemies no matter how dear they may be. The Kauravas have been unrighteous and if not checked they will destroy the Pandavas and through their actions the moral order of the universe as well. Therefore no matter how much it pains him, Arjuna must do his duty to strike them down. He must inflict violence both in self-defence, defence of his family, defence of the Pandava kingdom and preserve dharma. Arjuna will be failing in his own dharma as a kshatriya if he does not do so.

The other side of the coin is that Duryodhana too sees himself as a kshatriya and in the Great War at least, acts within the framework of kshatriya virtues. He is scornful of Yuddhisthira's desire for peace. Instead he taunts the Pandavas by reminding them of all the wrongs he had done to them because he wants to prove his superiority as a warrior and king. He answers therefore on kshatriya terms:

> Giving up this hypocrisy, O king adopt the practices of a Kshatriya and do all that one should do as such. Art thou not virtuous, O bull among

> men ? Acquiring the earth by means of the prowess of thy arms, make gifts, O best of the Bharatas, unto the Brahmanas and to the spirits of thy deceased ancestors as one should. Seeking the good of that mother of thine who hath been afflicted with distress for a series of years, dry up her tears, and confer honours on her by vanquishing (thy foes) in battle. … That for which a Kshatriya lady bringeth forth a son is now arrived ! Displaying, therefore, in battle thy might, energy, courage, manliness, and great dexterity and speed in the use of weapons, appease thy wrath ! (*Udyogoparva*, 161)

He concludes his speech with the notorious announcement that he will not yield a sliver of earth without war. At the heart of the Mahabharata war, then, we have a very basic issue: a prince who is determined to keep what he regards as his rightful throne through inheritance. This is the good ksatriya fight. And this again underlines why the Pandavas have to go to war: otherwise there will never be any true peace and Draupadi will be unavenged.

But Duryodhana dies in single combat fighting honourably. So he can boast at the moment of his death:

> I have performed sacrifices, supported a large number of servants properly, governed the whole earth with her seas ! …Who is there more fortunate than myself ? I honoured all my kinsmen and attended to the welfare of all my dependants. …I studied the Vedas and made gifts according to the ordinance. My life has passed in happiness. By observance of the duties of my own order, I have earned many regions of blessedness hereafter. Who is there more fortunate than myself ? By good luck, I have not been vanquished in battle and subjected to the necessity of serving my foes as masters … That which is desired by good Kshatriyas observant of the duties of their order, that death, is obtained by me I Who is there fortunate as myself ? By good luck, I did not suffer myself to be turned away from the path of hostility and to be vanquished like an ordinary person ! By good luck, I have not been vanquished after I had done some base act! …By dying upon the sacred field of Samanrapanchtka, celebrated over the three worlds, I shall certainly obtain many eternal regions ! (*Salya parva*, 64)

And we know that he is right. He does attain swarga or heaven with all its pleasures because he fought as a kshatriya should. This does not automatically make him good, but he is entitled to enjoy the fruits of his karma.

Hopefully, this brief outline is sufficient to establish that Hinduism does not shun violence. It is true that masculinity or virility here do not

have the same implication as in the West. While the very foundation of kshatriya varna is to show valour in warfare and tournaments, the men of other 3 varnas are not expected to have this virtue. Certainly, they can be brave and fight, but it is not obligatory for them to be war-like and they are not scorned if they follow non-violence and aquieter lifestyle. For example, Parasuram recognizes Karna must be a kshatriya since he has borne pain without complaint; no Brahmin could have done so. Even in marriage we find the same ethos. Sita and Draupadi are both *viryasulka* — that is, they will marry only someone who had performed a great act of valour. Thus even a proper Kshatriya marriage becomes associated with sanctioned violence. In fact for a khsatriya to be committed to total ahimsa is to be a failure personally and this would lead to failure of the social order as well. Since by nature men are more prone to *rajas* (passion, excitement) and *tamas (*dullness, greed*)* gunas than *sattva* (purity) guna, society cannot maintain itself without the warrior's protection. The ideal warrior is one who defends and maintains the social and ritual order that is known as dharma — thus *hinsa* or violence is legitimate when applied in the cause of dharma. To be a kshatriya is to always be ready to go to battle to protect the helpless, and one's family and subjects and honour. To refuse to do so is to reject dharma.

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The Spiritual Core of Indian Performance: The Progression of *Rasa* Theory from Bharata to Rupa Goswami

Janardan Ghosh

It is indisputable that performance, in Indian culture, holds a position of utmost significance. India is well known for its great array of performing arts, particularly those from the classical, folk, devotional and modern traditions. Performance still nurtures Indian culture, as is apparent from the celebration of festivals which include dance, music and worship with images and rituals. The diverse range of cultural expression in Indian theatre, dance and music has solicited scholarly attention from across the globe. Numerous scholars have tried to delineate and explore the nuances of the fascinating world of Indian performance. While most of them have been interested in investigating the esoteric and spiritual elements in the various forms of Indian performance art, others have searched for the secular performative elements in Indian praxis. Scholars like M. Muller[1] and Susan L. Schwartz claim that the "sources of performative inspiration in India have been religious from the beginning" (2). By contrast, A. Hillebrandt and Sten Konow believe that it is a mistake to locate the origin of Indian performance, especially drama, in religious ceremonies[2]. According to them, a popular mime art existed, which, combined with the art of epic, and gave birth to ancient performance, namely Sanskrit drama (Tarlekar 8). I believe that the birth of performance, both Indian and western, is still a mystery. Nonetheless, the impact of spirituality and ritual on the emergence of Indian performance appears irrefutable when we stop searching for the sources of the theatre in a particular Vedic rite and focus instead on theatrical testimony. In doing so, we find F.B.J. Kuiper turning to the treatise on the origin of drama and eventually discover traces of Vedic mentality in performing rituals and the scenic representations within (Lidova 5). Therefore, based on Kuiper's suggestions, we can reconstruct the formal genesis from ancient Indian texts on performance, supported by

intuitive and imaginative approaches. Among the various manuscripts, the *Natya Sastra* is one of the oldest and most enigmatic texts on Indian performance. The name of the book consists of two Sanskrit words *Natya*,[3] which means scenic action or theatre, and *Sastra*[4] meaning holy treatise. Though we can hardly say anything about the time of its creation and the author in particular, many scholars claim that it was Bharata Muni, who claimed to have received his knowledge of dramatic art from *Brahmâ* and then compiled the treatise *Natya Sastra* (hereafter *NS* for references)[5]. The book consists of 36 chapters dealing with diverse subjects: the mythological origin of performance, the rituals of early performance, the aesthetics of literary drama and performance (*rasa*), and the various principles of acting and dramatic theory. NS claims that performance offers teachings leading to the righteous path and aesthetic knowledge.[6] In Chapter XXV, NS mentions that performance should satisfy one and all, who have varied tastes: A young man would enjoy scenes of love, a learned man would seek religious and philosophical doctrines, a lover of money would relish topics of wealth and a passionless man would desire liberation. Bharata believes that performance could serve all of them by evoking *rasa*. *Rasa* is so called because it is relished.[7] Its meaning, in the context of Indian Art, is generally accepted as "aesthetic delight" (Tarlekar 54). *Rasa* is, therefore, also used to describe the primary goals of performing arts in India in all the major literary, philosophical, and aesthetic texts, and provides the cornerstone of the oral traditions of transmission. Among the large number of commentators of NS, Abhinavagupta interpreted NS based solely on the principles of *rasa* (M Ramakrishna Kavi). Abhinavagupta states that the purpose of performance is bliss or pure pleasure: "*Rasa* consists of pleasure, and *rasa* alone is drama, and drama alone is the Veda" (Masson and Patwardhan 55). According to Abhinavagupta, rasa is not merely a psychological experience but a transcendental one, which involves "the return of consciousness to its own innate and universal but immediate ecstatic nature" (Gnoli 73). However, Abhinavagupta insisted that only the spectator is capable of experiencing the mysterious delight of rasa because they can maintain proper "artistic distance" (Masson and Patwardhan 33). Two later scholars, Bhoja and Visìvanâtha Kavirâja, differed from Abhinavagupta and claimed that the actor is also "*rasavân*," capable of transcending the ordinary world (Haberman 29). Thus, eventually, *rasa* played a central role in the study of some specific aspects of religious realization in the actors and the audience. Centuries later, popular scholars and saints using devotion as a mode of religious expression began

consciously to adopt *rasa* theory strategically in religious realization—a state of devotional union. The Gaudîya Vaisnava tradition associated with the Bengali saint, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, explores and makes extensive use of rasa evoked by performance to meet its religious goal. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's disciple, Sri Rupa Gosvâm+, maintained that Bhakti should be recognized as an absolute *rasa*, although some Sanskrit rhetoricians have rejected this theory.[8] Rupa introduced his doctrines in a seminal book, *Bhaktirasâmtasindhu*. According to the modern scholar David Haberman, Rupa Gosvâmin reinterpreted Bharata's *rasa* theory to delineate the practice of popular devotion (*bhakti*) in which role-playing / acting / imitation becomes the primary means for achieving salvation / release. Haberman argues convincingly that in religious role playing, where imitation is a central mode of religious action, life becomes a divine stage for the holy actor who imitates the role of a paradigmatic religious figure (Characters from Lord Krishna's life), thereby "internalizing a transcendent role" and attaining salvation (151). Thereafter, Gaudòîya Vaisònòava scholars like Rupa Kavirâja and Visìvanatha explained the process of entering the cosmic drama and playing various roles. The nineteenth century Bengali saint, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, used Rupa Gosvâmin's technique as a transformative device as part of his *sâdhana*. Thus, the journey of *rasa* from the field of performance to the mystic world of religious realization reflects the deep connection between spirituality and Indian performance. The spiritual significance of performance has gradually percolated through to the populace. Till date, most Indians attend performances of different types in order to experience devotion and wonder (religious plays happen in *âsìramas* and temples). These performances are not limited to devotional performances like *kîrtana* or *Râmlîla*; they also include other genres of performance, such as cinema, TV soaps and serials (eg. *Ramâyana, Mahâbhârata, Caitanya Lilâ* etc.).

By the fifth century AD performance based on Bharata's tradition completely vanished and, hence, Drama teachers were replaced by critics giving commentaries on Bharata's theories. These commentators had no live performance to study but the revered book alone. The critics explored various aspects of performance and their relevance to society and philosophy. Abhinavagupta tried to equate the theory of *rasa* with his spiritual philosophy and claimed that *rasa* is equivalent to the ultimate spiritual experience. A later scholar and saint, Sri Rupa Gosvâmi formulated a practical use of *rasa* theory in developing *bhakti sâdhana*. In this final

section, I shall investigate the use of *rasa* by devotees and spiritual masters, as performers of specific acts aimed to attain their coveted goal, the Ultimate experience. The conceptual evolution of *rasa* will thus reveal the inherent flow of spirituality in Indian performance and establish the element of performance within the world of spirituality.

Section i

Rasa in Bharata's Nâtya Sastra: The Enigmatic Element of Indian Art

Nâtya Sâstra is widely considered to be the first comprehensive book on Indian performance. Bharata, the legendary author of the *NS*, is said to have received his knowledge of dramatic art from Brahma. However, the content of the treatise showed that it was not written as a single book from beginning to end and it lacks unity of thought. Various scholars believe that it is the result of many authors' efforts, throughout centuries, whose names are not known to us.[9] There is no account of Bharata as a writer in any of the *Purânas, Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*. The word *bharata* originally meant actor, which might have given rise to this eponymous author Bharata (M Ramakrishna Kavi LXXI). While earlier scholars dated *NS* between 2nd century B.C.E. to the 4thcentury A.D., contemporary Western Indologists claim that *NS* emerged probably around the 1st and 2nd centuries AD (Lidova 2). There is a mythological account of the creation of *NS* by Bharata Muni. In his book, Bharata observes that generally, emotions like desire, greed, jealousy and anger which promote ego emerged in the *Treta-yuga* when people were losing their way, just after the perfect age. As the multiplicity of divisions increased, egoistic emotions developed and intensified, which led to an increase in sorrow. Gods, led by Indra, appealed to Brahmâ, the Supreme Creator, to find a solution to this predicament. He suggested the creation of a new Veda which was both audible and visible. Accordingly, Brahma went into a deep state of meditation and designed the Fifth Veda (*Natya*) out of the existing four Vedas, the Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. Brahma then remarked: "This drama will therefore provide instruction to everyone in the world through all its actions, emotional states (*bhavas*), and *rasas*" (*NS* Ch. XXV). Bharata remarks, "Brahma created the *Nâtyaveda* for the benefit of all the *varnas* as the *Sudras* could not be instructed in the Veda" (Tarlekar 2). The four constituents of the *NS* were adopted from the four Vedas: recitation from Rig Veda, song from Sâma Veda, histrionics from the Yajur Veda and the

rasa (sentiments) from Atharva Veda. Prof. Jaitly claims that the sentiments, constituting *bhâva* (mental state) and *vibhâva,* manifest as *rasa*, which is clearly evident in Atharva Veda (*Rasânâtharvanâdapi, NSì* 1.17.2). Scholars claim that in India, drama was considered to possess an edifying quality, because of its ability to create a unique experience called rasa.[10] Unlike Aristotle's Poetics, which was written after the best had been achieved in classical Greek theatre, *NS* was known long before many of the classical Sanskrit plays were written. Hence, while Aristotle formulates his theories based on plays, namely *Oedipus Rex* (the ideal tragedy), *NS* independently configures the principles of performance. The Indian conceptions of drama invariably rejected tragedies and were instead aimed toward quietude.[11] A kind of song called *Prâsâdikî Dhruvâ* was sung after every heightened mood to bring peace of mind. The drama was meant to arouse emotions and sentiments known as rasa through the imagining of situations where life was presented in a dramatic spectacle. According to Bharata, the *Vibhâvas,* (the determinants that include the character, the ambience surrounding the character that creates the illusion of reality, and other elements that are required to provoke imagination)[12] along with *Anubhâvas* (the expression of particular moods of the characters, includes *Abhinaya*, acting) and the *Vyabhicâribhâvas* (transient moods) create the appearance of life, which then awakens the permanent latent moods of the spectators. The spectator intelligently accepts the imaginary world and actions in the performance to be true, which allows *rasânubhûti* (experience of *rasa*). The experience of *rasa* helps the audience lose its ego because while accepting the imaginary as truth, the spectator loses all awareness of the imaginary world of performance.[13] It is different from the existing reality, but at the same time similar to it. This unique experience transcending time and space is a source of supreme bliss; the experience is never unpleasant.[14] *Rasa* is, therefore, a very important element of Indian aesthetics, and Bharata devoted one entirely complete volume to the subject.

The literal meaning of the word *rasa* is "sap", "essence", or "taste" as per the Sanskrit dictionary (Schwartz 5). Bharata condensed the meaning of the multifaceted word rasa into one sentence: That which is relished is *Rasa*.[15] Bharata, accordingly, gives the analogy of enjoyment of food, when explaining the experience of aesthetic delight.[16] Therefore, *rasa* in performance generally refers to "dramatic emotion" or "aesthetic experience," where taste, sound, image, movement, rhythm, and transformation meet (*NS1* I). *Rasa*, according to *NS*, is the delight of the

Sthâyibhâva (the permanent mood), experienced by the audience. The experiences due to *nâtyarasa* are not worldly experiences, but are *alaukika* (otherworldly); the reality as imagined by the poet and consequently by the performer. The sentiment is not in the performer, because he simply carries the sentiment present in the drama to the spectator, and consequently he is known as the "*patra*," the pot. Bharata maintains that the performance of a play evokes *rasa* and there are eight kinds of *rasas*: *Sringâra* (the erotic), *Hâsya* (the comic), *Karuna* (the pathetic), *Rudra* (the furious), *Vîra* (the heroic), *Bhayânaka* (the terrible), *Bîbhatsa* (the odious), and *Adbhuta* (the marvellous).[17] Bharata claims that out of these *rasas*, *Sringâra, Rudra, Vîra* and *Bîbhatsa* are the original ones and the rest evolve out of these four.[18]

The *Vibhâvas*, according to Bharata, are to be dealt with by the poet, which are to be expressed by creating an ambience-like atmosphere either through verbal renditions or other means. The *Anubhâvas* are to be expressed through gestures, which would eventually lead the spectator to deduce the sentiment or *rasa*. Thus the actors in a performance, which has an appropriate ambience and characters (*Vibhavas)*, use appropriate gestures expressing the mental states (*Anubhâvas*) and the transitory moods (*Vyabhicâribhâvas*) to produce the rasa within the spectator as depicted by the poet.[19]

The *Vibhâvas* or Determinants are the conditions and objects which give rise to the emotions. For example, in *Ramayana*, the determinants of the emotions within the Râmlilâ performance are Dasaratha's hasty decision to give two boons to Kaikeyî, Manthara's advice to Kaikeyî, Sûrpanakhâ's sudden visit to the forest and an unexpected meeting with Laksman. These factors dramatically generate the story of the performance.

The *Anubhâvas* include the performer's gestures and other means of expressing emotional states. These may be involuntary such as sweating, shivering and trembling or voluntary such as deliberate actions and gestures. For example: Hanuman's unexpected bodily growth, Râvana's anger due to Meghanâda's death, his involuntary bodily expression, Dasìaratha's heart breaking portrayal during Râma's exile.

The *Vyabhicâribhâvas* are the 'Complementary Psychological States' which exist temporarily in a performance, but contribute to the overall emotional tone of the play. In *Râmayana*, Sugrîva's initial doubt about Râma, Râma's army not believing Vibhîsana's change of sides, Bharata's

angry outburst at his mother, sarcastic attitude towards the king Dasaratha, Rama's helplessness and despair at the loss of Sîtâ, are some of the fleeting emotions which contribute to the major theme of the play.

The inner idea of the poet is made to permeate the mind of the spectator by means of chanting words, gesticulation, facial colour, and the representation of the temperament. The mental states are the cause of the manifestation of the sentiments (*rasa*) in the performance. These mental states are known as *bhâvas*.[20] There are forty nine *bhâvas* (8 *Sthâyibhâvas*, 33 *Vyabhicâribhâvas*, and 8 *Sâttvikabhâvas*), which are capable of exploring the vast range of human behaviours.

This special effect of the mental state is known as *sattva*. This entire gamut of physical acting, mental state and more, is known as *Abhinaya* in *NS*.[22] The sentiment of the play is conveyed to the spectator through *Abhinaya*. According to Bharata, *Abhinaya* is of four kinds: *Sâttvika* (temperamental), *Angika* (physical), *Vâcika* (verbal) and *Ahârya* (dress, makeup, etc.) (Tarlekar 67).

Anukarana, translated into English, is "imitation" but it is different from Aristotle's *mimesis*. While *mimesis* means the making of a copy of a copy of some original object and is never independent of the model, *anukarana* means copying those results in an independent creation free of the model. According to (Gupta, "Bharata's dramaturgy, *nâtya*, is a new creation not a shadow, it is a parallel and a free world, full of its own significance, even though it is unreal (*alaukika*)" (93). The perfection of *anukarana* is not dependent on the ability to represent the world, but its capacity to create a new world. The original is forgotten as soon as the creation is complete. The commentators on *NS* have insisted that there can be no recreation of the original. *Anukarana* literally means an activity, i.e. *karana*, which is in accordance with, i.e. *anu*, something else. So, there is an original to be followed in *anukarana,* but only to a certain extent. Then, that original is transformed into something different and another original, by recreating the *sthâyibhâvas*. Thus, drama, being *anukarana*, transforms the real world and actions into its own frame of reference (Gupta 106). Hence, *anukarana* evokes *rasa* that somehow lifts the spectator out of the suffering world and places him in a new and peaceful world, which is *alaukika*.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that *NS* and *rasa* have various religious implications hinted at by Bharata, which were explicitly defined

and explored by later scholars and saints. While Abhinavagupta explored *rasa* extensively, the other commentators gave more importance to *nròtya* and *gîta* to configure and construe the *nâtya*. Abhinavagupta's entire treatment of the *rasa* theory reflects a deep concern with the parallels between aesthetic experience and the experience of a mystic. Eventually, Abhinavagupta became the foremost among the earlier commentators.

Section ii

Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics of *Rasa*

Abhinavagupta was one of the most significant scholars of Monistic Shaivism and Indian aesthetics. We can infer from various references in his scholarly works *Tantrâloka, Abhinavabhâratî* and *Tantrasâra* that he lived in Kashmir at the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh century A.D. Abhinavagupta was born into a family which had a long tradition of scholarship and devotion to Lord Shiva.

Abhinavagupta made a significant contribution to Indian aesthetics by developing the theory of *dhvani* (sound) and *rasa*.[24] His theory of *dhvani* brought out the inherent dramatic character of poetry and thereby enabled the universal concept of *rasa* to cover both poetry and drama. His great commentaries, *Locana* and *Abhinavabhârati* (*AB*), explored *rasa* and *dhvani* in great depth. Abhinavagupta interpreted *rasa* philosophically, claiming that it is *samvid-visìrânti* (equanimity and composure) or *camatkâra* (extraordinary phenomenon), which underscored the essential need for specific roles and motives of different artistic media and techniques within the arts. While Abhinavagupta evolved *rasa* into a universally accepted aesthetic quality, it was Abhinavagupta's teacher, who had initially brought out the universal character of this subjective experience/feeling (Gnoli 85). Bhattanâyaka claimed that drama had special power.[25] Bhattanâyaka was the first scholar to explore aesthetic experience in terms of the audience's inward experience. He argued that the aesthetic experience of a spectator is similar to the experience of having an absolute realization (*âsvâda* of *Brahman*) (Gnoli 48). Mason and Patwardhan remark: "It may well be that Bhattanâyaka was the first person to make the famous comparison of yogic ecstasy and aesthetic experience" (21). Abhinavagupta was deeply influenced by these claims of his guru Bhattanâyaka and he philosophically establishes *rasa* as the very soul of drama or poetry.

For Abhinavagupta, *rasa* takes a prime position in exploring art and artists and he interprets these experiences as religious experiences. He insists that *rasa* transcends time and space for both the spectator and the actor and it also goes beyond the limited world of desires and the ego-bound life (Wulff 677). Enjoyment of *rasa* is blissful, and this aesthetic bliss is akin to the spiritual bliss of realizing one's own identity with the absolute *Brahman*. He interpreted Bharata's *sutra* to mean that *rasa* comes from the force of one's response to something that already exists.. It is when the unconscious, latent impressions are aroused to consciousness in the theatre by the *vibhavas* and so forth, and are responded to sympathetically, that one experiences *rasa*. The nature of one's response is particularly important for Abhinavagupta. "Poetry", he tells us, "is like a woman in love and should be responded to with equal love" (*AB* 3).

Scholars have observed that Abhinavagupta tries to draw a parallel between the 36 chapters of *NS* and 36 *tattvas* of Saiva philosophy. Abhinavagupta interprets imitation in the light of philosophy as *anuvyavasaya* or introspective reflection. He defines *nâtya* as "*âsvâdana-rupa-samvedana-samòvedyam vastu rasa-svabhâvam*" —the intuitive experience of *rasa* (*AB* 17). Abhinavagupta's metaphysical and Tantric discussions explore the issues of the non-dualist nature of God, the role of the power of God in the cosmic process, and the role of the recognition of God in the process of man's liberation from his bondage. According to him, Shiva is the only reality. Shiva is absolute and individual (*advitîya*), the primordial consciousness, free in his own will, free from all bonds, and by his nature is complete bliss (More 2). Shiva's non-duality does not imply that the world and people are illusions as certain schools of Advaita propose, but his non-duality assures the reality of the world as well. This recognition of the world's reality in the doctrine of *âbhâsavâda* does not lead to an acceptance of generally understood realism, but it is an attempt to express a contradictory mystical experience in which Shiva's omnipresence becomes a tangible experience. Shiva's monism ultimately leads to multiplicity in Shiva himself. In the systematic theology of the *Tantrâloka*, Abhinavagupta also discusses the creation of the world through 36 principles (*tattvas*, mentioned above in reference to 36 chapters of *N*S, and the mystic power of the Word (*vac*) which is full of creative vibration (*spanda*). The highest form of the Word is the mantra AHAM (I [am]). This mantra is perfectly conjoined with transcendent consciousness, which is one key aspect of the absolute reality. By methods of proper reasoning,

one can swiftly gain knowledge of the absolute truth (Shiva) and also know that one's inner self is one with Shiva, who is the omnipotent Lord, full of power and the creator of the visible universe. The idea of removing the bondage (i.e. *vighnas*) to liberate oneself and achieve *moksòa* is similar to the manifestation of rasa that happens only when the *vighnas* are removed. Aesthetic experience is, therefore, similar to the experience of a mystic (*brahmasvâda*), and they are both uncommon (*alaukika*, mentioned earlier). However, Abhinavagupta also emphasizes an important difference between these two kinds of experience: the aesthetic experience is temporary (it slowly disappears as you leave the theatre), but the spiritual experience of a mystic is a profound and permanent state. The other difference is while *moksa* is an experience beyond illusion; *rasa* tends to be experienced by remaining a participant within an illusion (i.e. intelligently accepting the imaginary to be true).

An aesthetic experience, according to Abhinavagupta, has at least three stages: First, the spectator is introduced to the artistic work, which evokes in the receiver a state of wakefulness. The spectator accepts the imaginary world of performance to be true. Then the spectator is excited, and consequently the emotional situation described in the performance creates "sparks" in the spectator's consciousness, leading to the revival of traces of his own experiences. Thus, the emotional response is a positive reorientation in the receiver and gradually the receiver abandons the thoughts and concerns of daily life and gets immersed in the act of performance through *rasa*. The experience purifies the thoughts, will and emotions of the receiver or spectator. Second, the full dedication and involvement in perceiving the emotional signals received from the performance create an immersive feeling for the spectator, an out-of-the-world experience (*alaukika*). And finally, "tasting of taste" (*rasa-rasana*) appears, the *sthâyibhava* is relished by *âtman,* that is characterized by a feeling of bliss (*ananda*) and tranquillity. This brings the aesthetic experience close to the immediate (and liberating) knowledge of the truth, the absolute and the self (More 3).

Abhinavagupta further states: "Art is not just about evoking certain feelings; a real work of art, in addition to possessing emotive charge, needs to have a strong sense of suggestion and capacity to produce various meanings." This is where he refers to *dhvanivâda*. He says that for a work of art, it is not enough to have *abhidhâ* (literal meaning) and *lakcanâ* (metaphorical meaning); it should also possess *Vyañjanâ* (the suggested

meaning). Thus, an aesthetic experience cannot be experienced like any ordinary, mundane experience. A true aesthetic object does not simply stimulate the senses, but also stimulates the imagination of the spectator. Once the imagination is stimulated, the spectator aesthete gets transported to a world of his own creation. This emotion de-individualizes the person by freeing him from those elements which constitute individuality, such as place and time, and raises him to the universal level. Art is therefore otherworldly or *alaukika* in its nature (*AB* 78).

While Abhinavagupta stressed the experience of the spectator or receiver alone (rasa experienced by the audience or reader) other scholars disputed this. Bharata never addresses the issue directly in his *NS*. However, an earlier commentator, Bhattal (9th Century), states that rasa is present in both the original character, eg Râma (*anukârya*) and also in the performer, the actor who plays Râma (*anukartâ*), because the actor attempts to be congruous (*anusandhâna*) with the character.[26] Bhattal, unlike Abhinavagupta, thus concentrated on the actor and showed no interest in the spectator. Abhinavagupta criticised this theory; possibly anachronistically he focussed on the spectator's experience. Abhinavagupta felt that the actor is deeply involved in technical matters to reach a higher state of experiencing the *rasa*, whereas the spectator is comparatively free and focussed (*tan-mayî-bhavana*) to experience the *rasa* (Masson and Patwardhan 33).

Two later scholars, Bhoja and Visìvanâtha Kavirâja, adopted a different view on this issue of the experiencer of *rasa*. Hence, we find that various scholars have different viewpoints about the experiencer of *rasa*. While Abhinavagupta claims that only spectators can experience *rasa*, Bhoja and Visvanâtha claim that both performer and spectator can experience *rasa*.

The position of the scholars regarding *rasa* and *bhâva* depended on their philosophical preferences. According to Indian philosophy, it is found that the *Parinâma-vâdins*, like Bhoja and Visvanâtha, claim that the world is a transformation of the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman* while the *Abhâsa-vâdins*, like Abhinavagupta, claim that the world is real but not a transformation of the Ultimate Reality (Potter 150-85).

Another very interesting contribution of Abhinavagupta is his addition of one more *rasa* to Bharata's list of eight *rasas*: namely, *Sânta rasa*, which is a state of tranquillity. Abhinavagupta states that *âtma-jnâna* or *âtmâ* itself is the *sthâyibhâva* of the *sânta rasa*. *Âtma* is fundamental,

unchangeable, whereas the eight *rasas* are temporary and constantly changing, and therefore, the ultimate rasa is *sânta* (Masson and Patwardhan 130-31). Bhoja also reduces all *rasas* into one supreme *rasa*, *ahamkâra rasa* (ego), which Bhoja calls *Sringâra* (love). Bhoja claims that the blissful experience of *rasa*, lit by the spark of *ahamkâra*, is a part of our soul, the Self, and so it is an experience of the Absolute Reality (*Brahman*) (Raghavan 453). Therefore, both Abhinavagupta and Bhoja, in spite of their differences, agree that the experience of rasa is a blissful experience akin to the religious experience of *brahmasvada.* However, a later scholar Jagannâtha, the writer of *Rasagangâdhara*, claims that rasa is *caitanya* (pure consciousness) itself.[27] Jagannâtha's interpretation provides a spiritual philosophy, which claim *bhakti rasa* itself to be the *Bhagavân* (the Lord or Brahman) similar to Gaudiya Vaisnava philosophers who consider *bhakti* to be a *rasa* and also desire *bhakti* to be their final goal or Ultimate Reality.

The sixteenth century Gaudiya Vaisnava saint, Rupa Gosvâmin, uses *rasa* theory to devise a religious practice named *Râganurâg bhakti sâdhana*.

Section iii

Rupa Gosvâmi's Application of *Rasa* Theory to Sâdhana

The Vròndâvana Gosvâmîs were the foremost philosophers of the Gaudiya Vaisnava school, who started their investigations from the acceptance of the Upanisadic truth that Ultimate Reality or God is existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ânanda*). Jiva Gosvâmin, in his book *Bhagavat-Sandarbha*, claimed that the Ultimate Reality—here accepted as *Bhagavân* Krishna—is distinguished by his three powers (*svarupasakti*, which correspond respectively to *sat-cit-ânanda*). The *sandhinisakti* is considered to be the power of existence, which creates and sustains and destroys life in the universe. The *samvitsakti* is the power of consciousness, which helps to know and the *hlâdini sakti* is Krishna's power of infinite bliss, which helps Krishna to experience bliss and causes bliss in others (Jiva 22). The Gaudiya Vaisnavas consider the last and the third aspect of *Bhagavân* to be the most important power of Krishna. According to them, love (*rati*) is the play (*bhava*) of the great power (*mahâsakti*) and love is the essential nature of God (*BRS* 2.5.74). The desired aim of a Gaudiya Vaisnava is to participate in this blissful aspect of God, which is known as *bhakti*. Since emotions are the most important means of reaching the

Ultimate Reality, Krishna, Rupa Gosvâmî recognised the usefulness of the existing rasa theory to explain the Gaudiya Vaisnava *sâdhana*. To explain the process of *bhakti* he took the help of *NS*, especially the rasa theory, and presented religion as drama (Haberman 33).

Rupa, in his seminal book *Bhaktirasâmròtasîndhu,* claims that *bhakti* is the absolute *rasa*. Abhinavagupta mentions *bhakti* in his discussion of *sìânta rasa* as an emotion conducive to *rasa* (Masson and Patwardhan 139). Vopadeva, a Marathi scholar, mentions *bhakti* as a rasa, for the first time, in his book *Muktâphala* (Vopadeva 5). Himadri wrote a commentary on *Muktâphala*, where he applied various elements of Bharata's *rasa* theory to *vaisnava bhakti* (Vopadeva 187). Later, Rupa provided a detailed and sophisticated elaboration of *bhakti rasa* in his book. He reinterpreted Bharata's *rasa* theory to delineate the practice of popular devotion (*bhakti*) in which role-playing (*anukriti*) / acting (*abhinaya*) / imitation (*anukaranòa*) became the primary means of achieving salvation (*moksòa*). Haberman writes, "The nineteenth-century Bengali saint Ramakrishna, for example, dressed as a woman for a period as part of his *sadhana* (138).

Conclusion

Sri Ramakrishna knowingly or unknowingly practiced the form of *râgânugâ bhakti* endorsed by Rupa Kavirâja, with perfect results, as specified in the scriptures. At the same time, Sri Ramakrishna practiced *vaidhi bhakti* as proposed by Chakravartin, wherein he followed the injunctions of the scriptures in his *sâdhaka* body. Sri Râmakrishna also improvised the practice of *râgânuga bhakti* by imitating not only Vrajaloka but also characters from *Râmâyana*, namely Sita and Hanumâna.

Sri Ramakrishna not only practiced *râgânugâ bhakti*, but he experienced *brahmâsvâda* during performances as a spectator and he also experienced the corresponding absolute bliss as an actor. Sri Ramakrishna's practical use of *rasa* was not only limited to his *bhakti sâdhana* but it extended to his social and cultural life, where he experienced *rasa* both as an actor and as a spectator. And according to him the *rasânubhûti* was *samâdhi* itself, which proves Jagannâtha's claim of rasa being Brahman. I would like to conclude that the rich aesthetic theory of India, which has permeated the spiritual culture of this country, remains profoundly relevant in contemporary times.

(Endnotes)

1. The idea of the religious rite as the root of the drama belonged to M. Muller and received support from S. Levi (Lidova 122)

2. A. Hillebrandt and S Konow recognized the impact of practical ritualism on the genesis of the drama but thought, nevertheless that the theatre proper arose from folk spectacle and ritual games. According to Konow, the ancient Indian drama was derived from a synthesis of the ritual pantomime, the shadow theatre and epic recitals (Lidova 122).

3. In *Natya Sastra*, Bharata writes, "When the nature of the world, possessing pleasure and pain both is depicted by means of representation through gestures and the like (i.e., speech, dress, makeup and temperament), it is called *Nâtya"* (Tarlekar 1).

4. "*Sastra* is the term accepted in the Indian tradition for holy writ dedicated to a particular field of knowledge" (Lidova 1)

5. According to the NS, the Gods pleaded with Brahmâ to create drama so that the knowledge of the Vedas became accessible to all castes. Brahmâ gratified them by extracting words out of Rg, song out of Sâma, abhinaya out of Yajur and rasa out of Atharvaveda and combined them with itihâsa to complete the fifth Veda, called Nâtyaveda (NS 1:11-19).

6. H. W. Wells remarks in his book, *The Classical Drama of India*, "The theatre was one of the disciplines of contemplation by which peace was established within the soul" (6)

7. NS. Chapter I., "Rasa Itî Koh Padârtha. Ucyate âsvâdyatwât" (23). According to Dr. Nagendra, The word Rasa in the sense of aesthetic delight came to be used probably during the fifth century B. C. to the second century B. C. (421).

8. A rather orthodox position on the question of whether bhakti could be rasa or not was stated by Manmata in his Kâvyaprakâsa, a late eleventh century text that many claim to be the single most influential text on rasa theory. Manmata insists that love (rati) for a god is only a bhâva, not a rasa (Haberman xlviii).

9. Early Nâtya Sâstra manuscripts are scanty. The extant ones differs from each other with interpolations and errors inevitable in copying. The text exists in several versions from different periods. Despite the varying state of preservation—some have come down to us in mere fragments—they are all assumed to ascend to a single original manuscript which gave rise to a tradition. This text is deemed to have come down to the 10th century in two versions—a full-length extensive (older recension) and a half-length concise version (later recension) (M Ramakrishna Kavi VIII – XXII).

10. Following the authority of the *Natya Sastra*, the Indian Aestheticians unanimously agree that *rasa* had a positive value and very often great religious value. The fact that the dramatic experience removes one from ordinary life certainly did not trouble Indian philosophers as it had Plato; in fact, it is precisely this quality of the dramatic experience that gives the imitative art of drama its value to Indian philosophers of aesthetics (Haberman 13).

11. The two tragic plays of Bhâsa, *Urubhangam* and *Karnabhâram* aim at the idealism of warriors and the obtainment of heaven through death in the battlefield. It is assumed that the tragic element is thus transcended.

12. *Visesana sthâyibhâva bhâvayati iti vibhâva* (*NZ* 1).

13. *Yatkinòcit svakiyaparakiya sambandha svikâr parihârâ bhâvahò sâdhârnòikaranam* (Bhattanâyaka). Bhatòtòanâyaka claims that when both, *svakiya* (it's mine) and *parakiya* (it's someone else's) relationships are lost on a particular object, act or event then the generalization of that object, act or event generates rasa.

14. *Natyadarpana* states, "*Sukhadukhatmako Rasah*." According to *Natòyadarpanòa*, the five rasas *Sròngâra, Hâsya, Vîra, Adbhuta* and *Sânta* are pleasurable due to the desirable *Vibhâvas* (141).

15. "*Rasyate anena iti rasahò*" (NS,Vol. VI 9).

16. NS states that just as a well disposed person, whose mind is free from other thoughts and thus centred on the act of eating, relishes the flavours while eating food to which various spices are added, and in this relishes the latent permanent states aroused by the presentation of the various emotions with the help of verbal, physical and mental gesticulation and gets joy in this experience. Hence these rasas are called *Nâtyarasas* (Tarlekar 56).

17. In NS, Vol. VI, it is written: Srnngârhasyakarunâ Rudravîrbhayanaka / Bibhatsabhutasangyo Cetyasòtyo Nâtye Rasa Smròtâ (15).

18. "Hâsya arises from Srnngâra and Bhayânaka from Bibhatsa. A mimicry of the erotic is called comic and the result of the furious sentiment is known as the pathetic. Adbhuta results out of the heroic and that which is Odious to behold results in the Bhayânaka" (Talekar 56).

19. Vibhânubhâva vyabhicâri samòyogada rasanispattihò (NS, Vol. VI 13).

20. In NS, Bharata states, "bhâvayanti iti bhâvahò" (Vol. I 294).

21. "Satvamò nâm manahòpravam / Tacca samâhitamanasattvâducyate" (NS. Vol. I, 374).

22. "Yasmâti prayogamò nayati tasmâdabhinayahò smròtahò" (NS. Vol. VIII, 7). By which the performance is provided to the spectators is called Abhinaya.

23. "Rasa bhâvâ hyabhinayahò dharmî vròttipravròttayahò / Siddhihò svarâstathâtodyamò gânamò ranògasìca sanògrahahò" (NS Vol. VI 10).

24. Anandavardhana uses the word Dhvani in *Dhvanyâloka* in a technical sense to mean a suggestive meaning, which acts as a manifester (vyanjana) of sentiment or rasa. In other words dhvani is a sequence of sounds emanating from vocal organs expressing a meaning which is different from the actual meaning conveyed by individual words (vâcaka). Dhvani is therefore, explained as one that expresses or manifests (dhvanati) or gets expressed (dhvanyati) (Raikote 11).

25. Bhattanâyaka states, "This power has the faculty of suppressing the thick layer of mental stupor (*moha*) occupying our own consciousness" (Gnoli 45).

26. Bhattò Lolla is first mentioned by Abhinavagupta in Abhinavabhârati. As other commentaries are missing, we have to rely on Abhinavabhârati. The translation by Gnoli is referred here, page 3.

27. *Ratyâdyavacchinna bhagnâvarana cit rasahò* (Jagannatha). Jagannâtha claims that when rati and other *bhâvas* are experienced then the layer of attachment is broken and *Atman* relishes its own *ânanda* which is rasa. As *ânanda* is *Atman*, so *Atman* relishes *Atman*. Hence, rasa is *Atman* or *cit*. (Narendra Nath Sharma).

28. The *Taittiriya Upanisad* had already said that *Brahman* is rasa (2.7: *raso vai sahò*).

Understanding Human -Nature Interaction through Selected Texts of Easterine Kire

Paloma Chaterji

This paper will study the human-nature interaction through the representation of the Angami tribes in the selected works of Easterine Kire, namely, *A Naga Village Remembered, A Terrible Matriarchy* and *Bitter Wormwood*. This paper attemps to reread the paradigms of ecofeminism with respect to Nagaland. I will study how ecofeminism challenges the various power structures like Patriarchy, Colonialism and Capitalism in the context of Nagaland. I will examine Vandana Shiva's notion of women's inherent relationship with nature. My paper will also reflect the constructionist standpoints of feminists like Meera Nanda and Bina Agarwal who challenge the essentialist approach of Vandana Shiva.

This paper will apply a postcolonial perspective to study the Angami Nagas. For some scholars combining Postcolonialism and Ecofeminism appears cumbersome, however, environmental oppression is only an extension of colonial and imperial ideology that oppresses humans. This paper will study the tribal, primitive, animistic lifestyle of the tribe and their gradual shift into a Christian, urban way of life. A postcolonial methodology is appropriate to study the status of women in a land that has had to face constant identity crisis due to perpetual colonization. Thus, it is a greater challenge for women who are subdued not only by the colonisers but by the patriarchal norms of their own clan. This doubly subdued female self is in search for a new feminine identity. However, as Val Plumwood states, "her new identity comes in reaction to the old" (Plumwood 62). Thus, there is a need to reevaluate women's identity which is independent of any previous power structure. The nature of patriarchy with reference to the tribe must be studied in order to understand their gender positioning and ecological behaviour. The Nagas are known for their indomitable fighting spirit. Kire's A Naga Village Remembered

opens with the preparation of a meeting. Pelhu's declaration "this meeting has been called to find out when we are going on the warpath to avenge our dead" signifies the practice of headhunting where they collect the heads of their dead enemies as trophies (Kire 3). The male dormitories where any youth with a man's heart would add to the stories of war define the exclusive patriarchal space that cannot be penetrated by women. However, to call them as only head-hunting warmongers would be to essentialize them. Naga men act as bearers of their family names and are endowed with the responsibility to protect their tribe. Men also exercise the sole right on parental property; in case there is no male heir in the family, property is passed on to the next male relative in the extended family. In spite of a strong patriarchal base the Naga society makes space for women to establish their independent identity. Most rituals demand the equal participation of both men and women. From the celebration of the sowing of seeds to the festival of 'Sekrenyi'[1]; nothing is carried out without the participation of women. Apart from protecting the Tribe there is no strict division of labour between men and women. Kire's A Naga Village Remembered describes the boy Lato trying to finish weaving baskets. Thus, from handicraft to agriculture there is no clear division of labour between sexes. However, the stringent Tiger killing ritual to the 'lasu2 death' surrounding women, exemplify the patriarchal essence of the tribes. In spite of this lack of difference between men and women it leaves scope for a gender fluid approach towards ecology in the Naga community. Women's 'Motherhood Mentality' and men's 'Marketplace Mentality' as pointed out by Paul Mohai do not fit in the context of this tribe (Mohai 2). Although women are the primary caregivers in the family; both men and women share an ethics of care towards the environment. Levi in *A Naga Village Remembered* declares "If you are at a community feast and take more than two pieces of meat, shame on you...This is the key to right living, avoiding excess in anything- be content with your share of land and feelings" (Kire 44). The men in this tribal society engage in taking care of nature thus debunking a strictly gynocentric approach of ecofeminism. Although the character of the grandmother in *A Terrible Matriarchy* endorses a strict division of labour between men and women where women through their sacrificing potential look after the family and carry out all household chores; the character of the grandfather is portrayed as a balanced man who treats both genders equally. This reminds us of Stuart Hall's remark that cultural identity comprises the true self and what we have become since history has intervened. The cultural identity of the colonised

as Hall points out also comprises what they have been forced to become (Hall 225). Therefore, without negating the gender fluid attitude of the Angami Nagas it is important to highlight how women's contribution in agriculture, which in other parts of India is primarily a male domain has led to farming being known as 'female farming' in Nagaland.

The animistic religion of the tribes makes them worship nature -- rivers, mountains, forest and the like. Nature is often thought to be a godly spirit who must be pleased by humans. In an effort to please nature certain anti-nature rituals like cutting a particular tree for worship, hunting animals to satisfy the animal God are followed. However, it would be imprecise to conclude that the taboos of animistic religion are born out of a fear of nature. The 'Genna[3] day' when no work is permitted in the field is a means to prevent the field's failure to bear grain. The attempt to make peace with the 'spirit', the stories about the unclean places of the forest, the dark water sources which were death to bathe in could be perceived as the recognition of the lower realm of nature- the Chaos. The rituals infused with taboos help the natives to retain oneness with nature as it is essential to embrace nature in its absolute form that brings together, blends and mixes both the Chaos and the Cosmos.

Kire's novels maps and charts the journey of Nagaland from colonial to postcolonial times. The association that the characters share with nature, the harmonious life of the tribes that we witness at the beginning of *A Naga Village Remembered*, gradually dwindle as we move towards the end of the novel and by the time we move to her second novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*, we can sense a complete disarray of the Naga culture. The exploitation of the Nagas as penned in Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered*: "they had occupied Angami lands, cut down their forests, taxed them, forced them into labour…" signify the attempt to alienate and dislocate the Nagas from their land (Kire 77). Amidst the mayhem what helped the Nagas to retain their authenticity was their strong cultural essence. However, colonization did penetrate the Naga society and culture. The widow in *Bitter Wormwood* happily planting the new grain 'rosholha', distributed by the British government which yielded more grain is an instance of how genetically hybrid seeds began to replace native seeds. This also marks the passive acceptance of colonial ideology. The introduction of Christianity is yet another attempt to pollute the cultural ethos of the Nagas. Christianity in Nagaland has had some positive outcomes like the curbing of the head hunting practice of the Nagas, the expansion of healthcare and formal

education. But Christianity has also acted as a major colonial power structure that has not always subtly erased the indigenous Naga spirit. Missionary schools did not teach anything about Naga culture and history and the White middle class ideas that were taught had no relevance to the largely agrarian Naga society. Thus, individualism replaced participatory cultural practices and with the advent of nontraditional means of livelihood the community increasingly became dependent on money. Sato's Conversion into Christian in *A Naga Village Remembered* signifies the overbearing presence of the Christian religion. However, the Nagas tried to find a new religious path which amalgamated the essence of both Christianity and their traditional religion. Sato exemplifies the union of two religions: "Now he no longer believed that the two religions were so diametrically opposite to each other... the way Sato understood it- to be a follower of Isu - was to be bound by taboos similar to the old taboos, but by taboos that had meaning" (Kire 76). Thus, it was through Bhababian mimicry that they attempted to subvert the overpowering Christian religion. In this context the doctrine of Christian Ecofeminism needs to be discussed. Christian Ecofeminist theology challenges mainstream Christianity as it believes that Creation should not be seen as yet another element of conquest and exploitation. Christian Ecofeminism therefore focuses on the relationship between ecology and gender through a Christian lens. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson argues that spirit is often identified as masculine and matter is often identified as feminine. "The ruling man's hierarchy over women and slaves extends also to nature which is most often symbolized as female" (Johnson 13). A balanced attitude towards ecology could be established through a more balanced understanding of the interconnection between God, human beings and other forms of creation, and this is possible if the concept of God is all encompassing and is not restricted to any particular gender.

The subsistence lifestyle of the Nagas without falling prey to poverty display how a community could survive without modern intervention. The Alder based agriculture, the Zabo[4] system of farming, the wet-rice terrace cultivation are some of the agricultural innovations that have helped them to maintain a self sufficient socio-economic structure. Their non-utilitarian philosophy marked by their unique practice of not selling rice which is most abundantly grown in Nagaland could be a striking instance of how tribals maintain their ecological relationship. There is no 'backgrounding' of nature in this tribal society. Nature is treated as a living entity that

participates in the daily affairs of life. Even the urbanization of the Nagas has failed to tarnish their bond with nature. Levi, the character in Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* impulsively picks up a bit of soil and smells its earthiness after returning home to his warrior village of Khonoma. Thus, the spiritual attitude of the Nagas towards nature and their surroundings is a reminder of what Arne Naess calls Deep Ecology. However, it is difficult to fully endorse such a view as these tribes do recognize the distinctions between humans and nature thereby not adequately falling into the paradigm of Deep Ecology. Interestingly, certain attributes marked by Karren Warren for the development of ecofeminism, namely- Inclusiveness, anti-objectivity, pluralism and relational sense of self seem to be the fundamentals of this tribal society.

Ecofeminism and postcolonialism go hand in hand as they both work as networks of resistance against structures of power. Kire's novels bring forth how the Angamis have a constructionist relationship with nature as their relationship is determined by social, cultural and economic factors, but what is interesting is that their bonding with nature continues even in the face of various challenges. Thus, nature is their ultimate weapon against all odds.

Finally, I would mention some of the trusted modes of maintaining an ecofeminist society as propagated by Karren Warren. Some of these could be strategic essentialism, the idea of the Situated Universals and the development of emotional intelligence. The 'Buddhist perspective on business' propagated by Stephen Gould and the idea of Ecofeminist Capitalism, developed by Halstead and Cobb that seeks to replace the GDP with the GPI (Genuine Progress Indicator), could be seen as some possible ways of maintaining an ecofeminist society. However, it is a matter of further research whether such principles would be suitable for a State like Nagaland that is struggling to maintain its authenticity.

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Footnotes

1. The **Sekrenyi festival** is a major sanctification festival of the Angami tribe. On the first day of the festival the chief lady of the house collects rice water into leaves and places them at the three main corners of the house.
2. An apotia death, in particular referring to women dying during delivery. Victims of Lasu are denied funeral rites because there is a very strict taboo on the lasu death. The word 'apotia' is of Assamese origin and is a term used for unnatural deaths.
3. 'Genna' means 'forbidden'. Genna days are no- work days. Agricultural activities to certain personal activities like travelling are forbidden during these days. The 'genna' days form a significant part of their agricultural tradition as it helps land to restore its fertility.
4. 'Zabo' is a system of conserving rainwater from running off the mountains. The forests in the hilltop prevent the water from seepage. Ponds are dug out at the next level to collect the water and it is brought to the ponds through bamboo channels. This water is then passed to the agricultural fields below through the cattle yards so as to use the animal feces as fertilizer for the fields.

Grandmother's Bag of Tales down the Ages: A Comparative Estimate of Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakurmar Jhuli* and Nabanita Deb Sen's *Rupkatha Samagra*

Arpita Dasgupta

The term 'folk' when appended to any form of cultural expression gives it an indigenous, ethnic dimension, characterizing the people, their clime and the soil out of which it has sprung over the ages. Harking back to a pre-literary era, the folktales, a significant part of which comprise the fairytales or bedtime stories lulling the children to sleep, are the most popular examples of the same. Published in 1907, Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakurmar Jhuli: Banglar Rupkatha* is a pioneering attempt to anthologize these Bangla folktales for children whose repeated reproduction in the audio-visual, digital formats in keeping with the changing times is a clear indication of their enduring appeal. In the same vein, Nabaneeta Dev Sen dedicates to her granddaughter her *Roopkatha Samagra*, published in 2011, where the renowned academic has penned down the tales she composed orally at different times for her daughters. This article attempts a comparative estimate of these two collections of stories, with special reference to Kiranmala from *Thakurmar Jhuli* and Icchamoti from *Rupkatha Samagra*. In so doing, it seeks to arrive at an understanding of the characteristic traits of 'Rupkatha' i.e. Bengali fairy tales for children and their relation to the changing spectrum of Bengali society down the ages.

Oral Culture: The very term rupkatha in Bengali amalgamating two words rup i.e. image and katha i.e. spoken words has orality ingrained in it. "Possibly derived from the words, 'aparupkatha' (wonderful tales)" (Ray xx) indicates a vivid form of storytelling compelling the listener to wonder and imagine. One of the earliest and popular examples, the

rupkathas of *Thakurmar Jhuli* are classified under four headings each of which in its rhythmical pattern introduces the readers to the respective tales. These sections are named keeping in mind the different stages of feeding and lulling to sleep the child. The first section named 'Dudher Sagar' (Mitra Majumdar 11-12) i.e. sea of milk opens this series of wonder tales to facilitate the child's drinking of milk. The stories concerning rakshasas and rakshasis comprise the section known as 'Rup Tarashi' (Mitra Majumdar 119-120) which alludes to their fearful appearance. The third section 'Chang Bang' (Mitra Majumdar 184-185) much like the chutney after the main course, contains the stories conceived in light humour to delight and entertain. The fourth stage is named 'AamSandesh' (Mitra Majumdar 241-242) which is the dessert. In this section there are no tales, only rhymes, which are lullabies by the end of which the child is expected to be fast asleep. To quote Abid Siddiqui, "Majumdar was probably the first collector to use a phonograph in field collecting" (Siddiqui 18) and the free flowing narrative of the stories where colloquial prose blends with rhymes captures to a great extent their oral origin, a commendable feat that even Tagore aspired for, but failed to achieve, as admitted by the Nobel laureate himself in his preface to the collection.

Bengali Flavour: In his prefatory note to the first edition of *Thakurmar Jhuli*, Rabindranath Tagore hails this collection of Bengali tales as 'quintessentially indigenous', (Ray xi) distinguishing them categorically from the fairytales of the West. The reference to the pairs of speaking birdsByangoma-Byangomi, and Suka-Sari, the accumulated wealth of seven emperors lying across the seven seas and thirteen rivers, the golden and silver wand for putting human beings in and out of sleep, all emanating out of the grandmother's bag of tales have been the bedtime accompaniments of children of Bengal from generation to generation. Tagore compares this home-grown, natural product with 'mother's milk' (Ray xii) that is always the best food for children. Tagore's appreciation of the indigenous quality of these tales gains in significance in view of the fact that *Thakurmar Jhuli* was published in 1907, in the midst of severe agitations that followed the declaration of the division of the Bengal Province by the colonial government in 1905. This has invited scholars to look beyond the frame of innocent children's stories and interpret *Thakurmar Jhuli* as a veritable product of the anti-colonial sentiments of the times. In the tales of *Thakurmar Jhuli* Debasmita Paul discerns a characteristic of the anti-Partition movement which "adopted the path of

'Swadeshi' – love for the indigenous and 'Boycott' of foreign goods". (Paul 153)These folktales subtly impart noble values and ideals. Here a king suffers from the guilt of not keeping his promise to his cowherd friend, the gentle, polite mannersof a well-bred queen serve to expose an imposter ('Kanchanmala, Kankanmala'), while an idle prince and his cronies are served ash instead of rice to make them earn their meal through hard work ('Sonar Kati Rupar Kati'). The stories end happily depicting the ultimate vindication of virtue and punishment of vice despite all odds which is imperative in view of the impressionable minds of the target listeners.At the same time, harking back to a pre-literary era emphasized in the titular reference to the most aged member of the family, "who are the fragile yet robust representatives of the bygone era" (Mitra84). For Lopamudra Mitra, Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's compilation of folktales in *Thakurmar Jhuli* (Paternal Grandmother's Bag of Tales) followed by *Thakurdadar Jhuli* (Paternal Grandfather's Bag of Tales), *Thandidir Thole* (Maternal Grandmother's Bag of Tales) and *Dadamoshayer Thole* (Maternal Grandfather's Bag of Tales) reflect a traditional Bengali society bound by archetypal values, customs and beliefs that may appear to some as counter-progressive. Here men practise polygamy – be it the king in 'Kolaboti Rajkanya' or an ordinary weaver in 'Sukhu Dukhu'. Their wives follow prescribed diet and observe rituals for the sake of conceiving a male child – be it the queen in 'Kolaboti Rajkanya' or a woodcutter's wife in 'Der Angule'. These sons – even when he is vertically challenged Der Angule ('Der Angule') or a monkey prince Buddhu ('Kolaboti Rajkanya'), are credited with heroic expeditions in faraway lands and rewarded by their marriage to beautiful princesses who bring with them significant share of their paternal kingdom ('Ghumonto Puri'). Md. Masum Billah identifies this as 'dowry' which "was a common practice for the elite class society during that time". (Billah 40) In this conservative approach of these stories retaining instead of challenging the stereotypes and hierarchies characterizing the archetypal Indian society, Debasmita Paul detects the seed of the eventual failure of the anti-Partition movement which spearheaded by the elite bourgeoisie did not reach out to the downtrodden. One of the tales from *Thakurmar Jhuli* though is admitted to be different. "In all the stories, apart from the story 'Kiranmala', one finds that women are relegated to the duties and responsibilities of the house, while the men venture into the perilous world of the unknown, fight evil forces and come out victorious." (Paul 162) In continuation of Debasmita Paul's analysis it can also be argued that this exception is in

itself a pointer to the variety of these oral narratives transmitted over a long period of time in different parts of undivided Bengal that merits more consideration than has been hitherto allotted to them. A close study of 'Kiranmala' is pertinent in this regard.

Kiranmala: The story begins with a king following the counsel of his minister embarking on a hunting expedition. After passing references to his killing elephants and tigers during daytime, this violence on wild life is undermined by viewing it as pretence to enable this otherwise righteous king to come out of his palace and go about the kingdom at night in disguise to survey the condition of his subjects. The solitary result of this survey that is relevant to the plot and hence mentioned in the story is a conversation the king overhears one such night between three sisters about their dream husbands which the king decides to fulfil. Accordingly, the eldest sister gets married to the king's groom, the second to his cook and the youngest becomes his queen. However, consumed with jealousy at the prosperity and superior status of their queen sister, the elder sisters take away her babies, two boys and girls, after their birth in three consecutive years, put them in earthen pots and set them afloat down the river. As for the king, he is informed that the queen has given birth to a puppy, a kitten and a wooden doll respectively. Such reports of abnormal delivery of the queen provoked further by her unknown parentage stir gossip throughout the kingdom that she is inauspicious, probably a witch. Influenced by the same the king banishes the queen from the kingdom. The three children are named Arun, Barun and Kiranmala by a Brahman who rescues them from the river and brings them up as his own children. These children arrive as God's blessing in the childless Brahman's life while the King's palace from where they have been ousted, is dark and lonely.

The first part of the story asserts rather than challenge the gender stereotypes which categorically distinguish between the female and male terrain confining the first to home and leaving the outer world for the latter with their definite set of rules, code of conduct and activities that Partha Chatterjee refers to as the "identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into ghar and bahir." (Chatterjee 624) Thus the Brahmin transmits his entire knowledge to his two sons Arun and Barun who are looked upon as his academic descendents while his daughter Kiranmala carries out all the household duties. She keeps the house spick and span, looks after the cow, assists the Brahman in his puja while her two brothers study and in their leisure time go

running after the deer in the forest. After the death of the Brahmin their life takes a turn when they see the king and amazed at his glittering spectacle decide to build a palace on their own. Through rigorous hard work over a span of twelve months and thirty six days their palace is completed. This palace is described in a series of hyperboles as a dream come true. "At the sight of the marvel that the two brothers had built, Moidanav, the architect of the gods, lost his taste for food, and Vishwakarma, the engineer of the gods, fled his home in shame. So tall was the mansion that it almost scraped the sun and nearly dislodged the moon." (Ray 22-23) However, a dispassionate observation of a holy man makes the siblings realize there is still scope to enhance their magnificent architecture, namely with the addition of a silver tree with golden fruit, golden bird and stream of pearls. The two brothers set forth one after another to secure these items from a magic mountain as per the directions given by the holy man. When they do not return Kiranmala decides to go in search of her brothers.

It is from here that the gender stereotypes are problematized. The young girl tends to her homely duties of watering the trees, giving fodder to the cow, and then ventures into the 'bahir' (Chatterjee 624) significantly donning the appearance of a man as well in the attire of a prince with a coronet on her head and a sword in her hand. Her journey to the faraway magic mountain is glamorised heightening the element of wonder of this rupkatha and emphasizing the singular determination of its protagonist. "Like a flame of fire and with the speed of the wind" (Ray 25) Kiranmala crosses several mountains and jungles walking continuously through thirteen nights and thirty three days to arrive at her destination. At the magic mountain several wild animals and evil spirits attempt to distract and block her advance. Ignoring all Kiranmala steadily approaches her goal. As per the instructions of the golden bird she finds on the diamond tree she sprinkles water from the stream of pearls to rescue several princes including her two brothers who have been turned into stone. After returning to their palace, now truly unparalleled with the gifts secured from the magic mountain, the siblings invite the King and serve him a meal made of jewels as advised by the golden bird. This talking golden bird acts as an eye-opener who mocks at the king's inability to eat this artificial meal and points out his naiveté at believing the fake stories contrived by his queen's sisters about her abnormal delivery. Thus the story critiques the irrational, superstitious beliefs about sorcery and witchcraft which are

basically contrivances and machinations of evil minds with vested interests. The fairytale ending shows the now aware and conscientious king bringing back his innocent wife and punishing her wicked sisters.

Tradition and Modernity: Published in 2011, more than a century after *Thakurmar Jhuli*, Nabaneeta Dev Sen's *Rupkatha Samagra* belongs to a time when rupkatha was a subject of literary interest to the writers as well. Her *Rupkatha Samagra* is a collection of the earlier published tales of the writer. Her introductory note which again is titled 'Rup o Katha' is an informative article about her thoughts on such wonder tales for children. She expresses her debt to Dakshinaranjan MitraMajumdar's compilation of oral tales in *Thakurmar Jhuli* and also to the tales written by her mother which have shapedher inclination towards this genre.While Rabindranath Tagore upholds *Thakurmar Jhuli* as an indigenous option to foreign fairy tales, many years after Independence, Nabaneeta DevSen openly declares herself as a lover of fairy tales, irrespective of language and nation. Several of her tales in *Rupkatha Samagra* are inspired from a wide range of sources e.g.'Dayiniburi, Baba-Yagaaar Puturani' from Russian fairytale, 'Tataiaar Babui' from Rajasthani folktale, "Keshtobishtur Kirtikolap" from *Panchatantra* as acknowledged by the writer at the end of the stories. There are also intertextual references to earlier fairytales: e.g. in the story 'Cycloper Jay Bangla' the young boy Tumtum recognizes the giant Cyclop as a character from Greek mythology: "Cyclop! My father has given me a book on Greek fairytales where I have read about them and King Ulysses' experiences on visiting their land. (DevSen 243) She worries instead about the increasing dominance of starkly realistic adventure and detective stories in contemporary Bengali literature which unlike Rupkatha have little scope for the flourishing of a child's imagination, an essential ingredient for a healthy, balanced mind.At the same time she is quick to point out that Rupkatha is not quintessentially absurd or unrealistic. The experiences, struggles, hopes and aspirations of the characters in these wonder tales exhibit different facets of life although through the colouring of grandeur and fantasy so as to engage the attention and charm the young, immature nascent minds. Besides their engagement with universal issues of life, these folktales for children, according to Dr. Dev Sen, should reflect the changing times to prepare the children for their future life. While Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's stance as a compiler in*ThakurmarJhuli* is mainly directed towards penning down as accurately as possible the tales he has heard, Nabaneeta Dev Sen as a writer of the tales has brought

in her own affiliations, convictions and beliefs in *Rupkatha Samagra*. One of the leading champions of gender equality in Bengal, the renowned academic is the Founder-President of SOI, an organization of women authors, artists and scholars. Accordingly, she describes herstories as "exhibiting women power" (Dev Sen) in so far as they bring the female characters to the foreground and counter the stereotypical image where they are more acted upon than acting. In her stories "the king and the princes are not super heroes but ordinary fallible human beings. Here the queen and the princesses, no longer weak and dependent, win over their enemy not through physical prowess but through their intelligence.(Dev Sen 8) Thus Dr. Dev Sen counters the age-old gender stereotypes through her rupkatha which she feels is the easiest way to train the young, impressionable minds towards a post-patriarchal age when women will be respected as self-sufficient individuals. Let us now turn to 'Icchamoti' the first rupkatha from Nabaneeta Dev Sen's book as a case-study revealing the truth of the above mentioned statements.

Icchamoti: The modernity evident in the tale 'Kiranmala' in its interrogation of superstitious beliefs and stereotypical norms of conservative society is reinforced in accordance with the leap of time in Nabaneeta Dev Sen's 'Icchamoti.' The story depicts a royal couple whose life revolves round their six sons. The sons nurtured by their mother's care in the inner sanctum of the palace, grow up and venture into the public domain as expected of men. There the princes give constant company to their father the King, be it at his court or during his hunting expeditions. Meanwhile the lonely Queen with no helping hand inside the palace, pines for a daughter as she offers puja to Lord Shiva. As a fruition of her prayers she gives birth to a beautiful girl child who is significantly named Icchamoti meaning mistress of her desires. The beautiful, little princess Icchamoti assists her mother in all her household chores but turns out to be dumb, a deficiency which no doctor in the kingdom is able to cure. Deeply worried about the future of her daughter, the queen following the instructions of divine prophecy sets forth alone in a stormy night on a pilgrimage to Shiva's shrine. This divine intervention in the story is a step forward from the passing references to gods from Hindu mythology in *Thakurmar Jhuli* e.g. the timely invocation of Goddess Jagadamba which saves a Brahmin ('Brahman Brahmani'), Goddess Shashthi blessing a Brahmin couple with a son though vertically challenged who change their fortune ('Der Angule') thereby emphasizing all the more the moral piety of the characters which is destined to be ultimately rewarded.

The articulation of woman power is palpable in the narration of the queen's fearless stepping outside her private domain for the sake of her daughter. Much like Kiranmala she carries a sword with her as a safety measure but this time the woman does not feel the need of a man's attire. She braves the inclement weather, walks straight to enter into a dense forest ignoring all sorts of discomforts. In the course of her journey the virtues of the queen are amply displayed in her charitable act of rescuing a little bird which has fallen from a tree, her honest, humble nature in choosing a simple raft made of leaves over a golden boat to cross a river which falls on her way, her fearless discourse with a hungry lion she encounters at the gate of a palace on the values of hospitality – all of which aid her in achieving her desired end. She arrives at the shrine and offers her puja to Lord Shiva. The glorification of womanhood is all the more palpable through a simultaneous presentation of the fallible manhood epitomized by the conduct of the king and the six princes as they proceed via the same route searching for the queen. They travel on horseback, jump on the golden boat and are almost drowned, attack and behead without any provocation seven lions with their weapon, which compels the keeper of the lions, a giant to appear and demand an explanation from the king. When the king instead of admitting his mistake defends the violence on innocent animals as a part of their hunting expedition, a natural habit and privilege of royalty, the giant displays his natural instincts by swallowing all the six princes, leaving the king alone and mourning. Much like Kiranmala, who brings to life her petrified brothers, the queen's arrival after offering puja sets everything right in this story. On hearing everything from the king she stitches the heads of the lions that come alive and brings back her six sons from the giant. The lions and the two giants at the palace then carry the royal family in an instant back to their kingdom where they find to their extreme happiness that princess Icchamoti is no longer dumb. The anti-violence, pacifist stance of the tale culminates with the queen throwing away the sword she was carrying with her realizing that love and honest courage are the most powerful weapons that can eliminate all enmity and bitterness in the world. The rupkatha ends with a perfect picture of a happy family at the centre of which is a virtuous queen whose maternal affection extends beyond her own children to other living creatures like the small sparrow bird and the majestic lion.

Originating from oral culture these Bengali folk tales for children ever since their popular and successful compilation in *Thakurmar Jhuli* have

encouraged later writers to articulate and preserve such tales for posterity. Nabaneeta Dev Sen's *Rupkatha Samagra* is one such product. These tales develop a child's imaginative power, impart value education through entertainment, and under the garb of fantasy reflect the changing situation of the times. This is where the rupkathas become contemporary as well as universal. The recreation of the tales of *Thakurmar Jhuli* in different audio-visual mediums from the HMV records to the TV Serials, films and the modern digital platforms are ample testimonies of their continued relevance. At the same time they also indicate the decreasing numbers of such storytelling elders in the modern, hectic life characterized by stiff competition and solitary atomised existence. From the tales compiled by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar to Nabaneeta Dev Sen's articulations for her progeny, the rupkathas open up a rich, inexhaustible treasure-house before the children in which they can safely lose themselves and replenish their impoverished childhood. In this increasingly mechanized age haunted by loneliness and depression, the image of an affectionate grandmother opening her bag of tales that her grandchildren are listening to with rapt attention and wide-eyed wonder is a much needed nourishing, vitalizing relief.

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Re-viewing Samuel Beckett and Re-presenting His Indianness

Tapu Biswas

Samuel Beckett has been placed at the pivotal centre of literary explorations not only in the Western academia but also in the Asian and Indian universities as well. Many researches have been made on the literary oeuvre of Beckett that primarily focus on his absurdism and the writer's attempt to go beyond the conventional literary paradigm. However, there are some significant areas of problematic exposition which demand a minute and critical interrogation. My academic paper earlier entitled "Absurdity and Creativity, Innovation and Individualism, Myths & Mysteries In Samuel Beckett's Writings: A Critical Interpretative Study from an Indian Perspective" is a modest attempt to analyze the texts written by Samuel Beckett from the perspective of history, myths and philosophy. This paper will also provide a detailed comparative study of Beckett's writings from the oriental point of view, which will necessarily incorporate cogent deliberations of Indian and Asian litterateurs, scholars and critics. This research article is an effort to bring together several threads of interpretations, thoughts and ideas that go deep into the human psyche in order to bring out the nuanced portrayal of absurd vignette, which ultimately delineates the Indian responses to Beckett.

The prestigious coveted Nobel Prize for Literature for the year 1969 was awarded to Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906-1989), an Irishman by birth (who was 'damned to fame' from the time his enigmatic precocious play *Waiting for Godot*, with no woman character, was staged before a group of almost fourteen hundred convicts at the San Quentin penitentiary, California, USA). The Nobel was conferred on him "for his writing, – in new forms for the novel and drama – in which the destitution of modern man acquires its elevation".[1] Here was an award given for contributions,

which were a mix of "a powerful imagination with a logic*in absurdum*"[2], the obvious outcome in the bargain being a paradox. Born in 1906 near Dublin, Samuel Beckett, as an author, entered the world almost half-a-century later in an alien country, namely France. Having now gone on the wrong side of forty-five, he quickly, in the space of three years, was able to bring out the novel *Molloy* (1951); its sequel *Malone Meurt*['*Malone Dies*']in the same year; a play *En Attendant Godot* ('*Waiting for Godot*', 1952), and two more novels *L'Innommable ['The Unnameable']* (concluding the cycle about *Molloy* and *Malone*), and *Watt*. Here was a twentieth century genius whose poetry could not be understood or grasped even by the intellectuals, not to speak of the ordinary common man, and whose earlier plays hardly evinced any interest for a man of average intellect.

Writing in *Contemporary Poetry Review* about Samuel Beckett's poetry, the American critic and Professor of English Literature Andrew Goodspeed observed of his early verse as being :"Extremely difficult and occasionally unpleasant". He wrote:

> It [Samuel Beckett's poetry] is a body of work that can be as oblique, resistant and complex to the scholar as it is to a novice reader. Even his fervent admirers tend to regard it as recondite and baffling. For those unconvinced by Beckett, the poems are easy targets. They contain in microcosm, precisely those faults his detractors find throughout his oeuvre- squalor for squalor's sake, indulgence in gloom, endless obscurity, pointless obscurantism, unfollowable erudition, reference to the untraceably personal, and the occasional unexplained diversion towards what seems motiveless degradation of humanity…

In the words of the noted French-American novelist and academic Raymond Federman, a known friend and great connoisseur of Beckett, who claimed to have read and re-read all books authored by Beckett, in English and in French, "one must be crazy to read the entire oeuvre of Beckett…Certainly only mad people – fanatics – would spend time reading and re-reading everything Beckett has written… In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett's most celebrated play, Estragon '[aphoristic for once]'says*: '*We are all born mad. Only a few remain so'…"[3] Federman observed:

> I believe I am one of those who remained mad, because for more thanforty-five years I have not stopped reading and re-reading the

> books of Samuel Beckett, and I always imagine that others, too, are as mad as I am and they, too, never stopped reading and re-reading Beckett…"

Interestingly enough, two knowledgeable researchers B. McGovern and B. Stewart brought out a research paper bearing the symptomatic title: "Well, Well, So There's an Audience in the Plays of Samuel Beckett". In spite of the warnings to the contrary, the critics remained stubbornly insistent in finding meaning in all that Beckett wrote. First, it was a matter of finding the literary sources of Beckett's work, and what the critics gradually revealed was something like this:

> His [Beckett's] work was inspired by Joyce, Kafka, Proust, Flaubert. Balzac and moving back in time, the 18th century novel (Diderot and Laurence Sterne) and before that, Racine, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Cervantes, Dante and Homer. So many possible sources were concocted that, finally, one was reduced to saying that **the work of Samuel Beckett was, in fact, all of literature - the entire history [and story] of literature**… (emphasis mine)

Then came the critics who felt absolutely compelled to try and discover the philosophical and theological sources.

> And so Beckett was read as an Existentialist and a Phenomenologist, influenced by Sartre, Heidegger, Bergson and certainly Nietzsche, and by the pessimism of Schopenhauer; by the dualism of Descartes; by the Occasionalism of Malebranche; and, still further back in time by Luther and Calvin, St. Augustine, the Sophists, Plato and Aristotle and the Pre-Socratics; and of course by the Ancient and the New Testaments. That is to say, once again, that **the entire history of philosophy and theologywas allegedly contained in the work of Samuel Beckett…** (emphasis mine)

Eventually, what a tribute to the genius of Beckett! He was certainly one of the greatest and most influential writers of our time. Beckett believed and spiritedly asserted that an artists's duty was "to express the totality and complexity of his experience regardless of the public's lazy demand for easy comprehensibility"(Esslin 30).

> Here is direct expression – pages and pages of it. And if you don't understand it… it is because you are too decadent to receive it. You are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content

> that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read theother… The form that is an arbitrary and independent phenomenon can fulfil no higher function than that of stimulus for a tertiary or quartary conditioned reflex of dribbling comprehension (31).

Such was the genius of this great writer that, instead of stooping down to conquer the minds of his uninitiated readers or audience, instead of fashioning forth afresh his own style and manner to suit the taste of the ordinary reader or spectator, he stood his ground emphatically seeming to stress: 'I can't go on; I'll go on'. Such indeed was his genius that quite promptly he, instead of bowing before the intellect of the masses, 'taught' them to learn to seize and grasp the complexities and absurdities of his contributions in the right perspectives. Here was a genius who made himself one of the active protagonists of a new approach (or genre if we could so call it) to theatre that came to be known as 'Western Absurd Theatre'.

Such has been Samuel Beckett's academic distinction, reputation and standing in the world of scholarship that over the years ninety-five doctoral theses on his literary contributions have been accepted by first grade Universities in England. Of these 17 have been published by the University of Reading, 13 by the University of Oxford, 8 by the University of Cambridge, 4 by the University of London, 4 by the University of York etc.[4] English, French, German apart, his select writings are available in translation in Russian, Japanese and several languages of India. There has since not been any decade during which there have not been either Exhibitions of writings by and on him in libraries of worldwide well–known institutions of higher learning, or national or international Symposia or Conferences related to him, or simply dedicatory celebratory Weeks. Of the International Symposia mention may be made here of the one held at the University of Leiden in October 1991; and then the second held at The Hague, Netherlands, in April 1992. Another International Samuel Beckett symposium was held at Tokyo in 2006.

The focus of such Symposia *inter alia*has been on how the intellectuals all over the world study, research and interpret Beckett's writings and theatre productions. It is interesting that this highly controversial genius is, on the one hand, known for his comic and humorous gamuts - to include just 3 studies by Ruby Cohn (New Brunswick: N J Rutgers University Press, 1962); Valerie Topsfield (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988);

Laura Salisbury (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. On the other, the critics have equally enthusiastically been researching the element of the tragic, the shape of chaos, in his art. Even a most modest select bibliography of writings on him would easily run to over seventeen to eighteen thousand entries. Such then is a brief, bird's eye view of this literary giant Samuel Beckett and his impact and continual hold on the literary scene of the American and European countries.

"Coming to India, the work that has been done on Beckett scholarship since the pioneering M.Phil. dissertation and Ph.D. thesis of Tapu Biswas (published under the titles *Indian Response to Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot :* Kolkata, 2006 *: Indian Responses to Western Theatre of the Absurd Vol II ;* Kolkata, 2009), can be counted on finger tips. (Prof. Amitava Roy)" The publications that can be mentioned here are *Samuel Beckett and the Encounter of Philosophy and Literature* (2013) by Arka Chattopadhyaya and James Martell; *Samuel Beckett's 'Endgame' : Conversational Principles and Absurdity* (2014) by Ganesh Mundhe. An Indian scholar has , in mid-2014, submitted a doctoral thesis on 'Absurdity in Samuel Beckett's Select Novels' to Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibarewala University (Rajasthan, India). The theatre productions of Beckett's plays in various languages in various States of India have been almost intensively documented in the aforementioned published works of the present writer.

India is a land of ancient culture and civilization, whose sagacious sages over the years have, in many ways, been pioneers in advancing renowned theories and principles of poetry and drama. The world of Beckett scholarship at large is looking at India to find out what parallels and coincidences, if any, the theories of the ancient Indian thinkers on drama and poetry have with the paradoxical and complex views of Samuel Beckett. Scholars are curious to ascertain how to look at Samuel Beckett's aesthetics from the Indian standpoint. It was not for nothing that quite recently, a Conference was organized in the legendary holy city of Chester to find out the responses to Samuel Beckett of intellectuals from the "countries on the margins" (implying probably the countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia). The importance that this Conference gave to India may be judged from the fact that the organisers very logically and gracefully remembered to invite an Indian scholar, Tapu Biswas, to present the Indian perspectives. Unfortunately, the only invited Indian delegate, despite having submitted in proper time to the Conference organisers a résumé of the contribution

to be made by him, could not be present at the Conference because of non–receipt of the mandatory Visa in time from the British High Commission in India. The curiosity and the desire of the Western world to elicit responses from the ountries at the margins, particularly India, does not cease here. Now, as a part of a three–year collaborative research project undertaken by the Universities of Chester and Reading, and the Victoria & Albert Museum, another international conference on "Staging Beckett and Contemporary Theatre and Performing Cultures" was held at the University of Reading on 10th and 11th April 2015. The Conference *inter alia* propose to explore the impact of productions of Beckett's plays on British and Irish theatre practices and cultures while particularly looking at how Beckett has been studied **and staged internationally** (emphasis mine) - [including India]. At the same time, another International Conference was planned at Phoenix, Arizona, on 19th and 20th February 2015 by the Samuel Beckett Society, Arizona State University, in collaboration with some other relevant academic bodies, to bring together new emerging and established perspectives on the Nobel laureate's writings for sustained exchange of ideas.

Interestingly enough, one of the writings of Samuel Beckett bears the title *Mal vu mal dit* (" Ill seen, Ill said"). It is commonly known that the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi widely propagated: "See no evil, speak no evil" (a phrase that first emerged in Japan in the 17th century and was later adopted worldwide as a message of peace and tolerance). Can one analyse and interpret the inter-relationship between these two separate phrases "Ill seen, Ill said" and "See no evil, speak no evil"?

Samuel Beckett's passion for painting is well known though he himself never took up a brush (Cf. *Samuel Beckett: A Passion for Paintings*; essays by Nicholas Allen, Suan Screibman & Lois Oppenheim; *Samuel Beckett: A Passion for Paintings*, by Fionnuala Croke). As the scholars researching his great passion for painting emphasize, Beckett had an abiding interest in and love for painting, He wrote profound innovative essays on painting, he could explain painting beautifully, his best friends were painters [Jack Yeats, Avigdor Arikha, Bram van Velde, Jasper Johns, and many others with whom he collaborated] andhe could have, himself, been a great painter, but became that painter in his written work. He "painted tableaux with words" rather than with paint (The Imagery Museum of Samuel Beckett; a lecture delivered at Vienna in February 2000 by Professor Raymond Federman).

It may be conjectured that Samuel Becket, the Western writer, shared with Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian writer, an yearning for painting, seeing in painting a medium to convey thoughts as forcefully as through words or even one to project thoughts that cannot possibly be expressed with the same force with words. Like Beckett, Tagore too had some of the greatest painters of the time amongst his associates - for instance, his nephew Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), Nandalal Bose (1882-1966), Jamini Roy (1887-1972), the painter and sculptor Ramkinkar Baij (1906-1980). It is known that at the ripe mature age of over 60 years or so, at the height of his career as an eminent writer (to whom, writing and music, playwriting and acting came so easily, so naturally) Rabindranath Tagore suddenly picked up brush and colours to make a dent in the world of drawing and painting. Was it that at such a mature age the distinguished writer felt that there were some thoughts which he could not possibly make visible through the medium of words and that brush and colours could come to his aid for the purpose? There are several interpretations though no one can really arrive at the truth of this phenomenon. Does Samuel Beckett (of Irish descent) too shared such thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore (whose paintings and drawings were influenced partly by Scrimshaw from northern New Ireland)?

As Martin Esslin stressed in his essay in *20th Century Views*, "Beckett's characters may lose the capacity for locomotion, their senses may decay, yet their awareness of their own self continues relentlessly"(34). The awareness of their own mortality, feebleness… remains vigorous while all else is declining. Lalita Ramakrishna quotes Rosette Lamont "Awareness then is what matters for Beckett… He seems to prefer the Buddhist ideal of choiceless awareness more suited to a dramatist whose concern is with the irrevocability of human suffering"(34). It is a matter for study and research how such ideas have been inherent also in the works of some Indian writers. For example, the famous Indian Urdu poet, MirzaGhalib, too has portrayed characters whose awareness of their own self continued relentlessly even when they were losing the capacity for locomotion and finding their senses decaying.-

> Go HaathKoJumbishNahin / Aankhon Main To Dam Hai
> (though the hands have no [capacity for] locomotion, [yet] do the eyesstillretain their spirit][5]

Lalita Ramkrishna further goes on to mention that it is the "same kind

of awareness that remains undimmed in Krapp and gets stronger as he nears his end. Physically and mentally he is on the decline – fumbling fingers, unsteady gait, addicted to alcohol and bananas. Despite this decadence he is clear in his capacity to see himself as he is…"(34).

While there have been critical studies on "Beckett and French thought" or "Beckett and German thought", the idea of formulating a proper overview of "Beckett and Oriental Thought" has hitherto remained elusive. No serious attempt worth the name has so far been made to explore the Eastern elements, if any, in Beckett's works. Certainly, a literary giant like Beckett could not in any way be unaware of the great Eastern traditions of Indian thought. Interesting parallels can be explored between Beckett's texts and those of great Eastern sages though it has not yet been researched and discovered how much direct knowledge Beckett had of Eastern wisdom.

The founder and head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of Geneva, Swami Nityabodhananda, in one of his talks at the Musée des Monuments FrançaisTrocadero, Paris, touched upon the topic of atheistic spirituality of Samuel Beckett. He stated *inter alia:*

> The divestment of the 'I' (throwing away the crutches) down to the state ofsilence; the internal condition in which one no longer asks himself questions or, if so, it is without expecting answers; in which one remains without defining the mental states but simply discerning the nature of things, the essence, the *tathata*– these are the parallel lines traced by Beckett and Buddhism (6).

Swami Nityabodhananda affirms that Buddhism is an atheistic form of spirituality For Buddha life being a constant Becoming, an impetus toward becoming which pushes us ahead, between what we are and what we should like to be, this becoming gives rise to a physical and moral suffering. In answer to a question about suffering, Beckett is known to have replied that if in his writings he insists on suffering, this comes from no perversity on his part. We have only to look round us to ascertain the acuteness and universality of suffering. Everywhere, even in a London taxi, there are signs asking aid for refugees, orphans or handicapped children. The ideas which Beckett sows in his writings, such as: We have to go on, I am going on," 'it is always a beginning again'. 'Oh, in spite of that, what a beautiful day! Oh, what a beautiful day nevertheless', whisper to us of a possible transcendence. Another idea parallel to this is that of liberation through the attitude of not evaluating the nature of things, but rather integrating

oneself with that while observing it. This attitude of waiting without expecting answers – i.e. without setting a price, is one which emerges from Beckett's works (8). Swami Nityabodhananda asserts that the "Buddha's philosophy is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but realistic in the sense that it tries to make us discover the co-existence in us of suffering and its transcendence, leaving the choice to us. This liberty is equally evident in the thought of Samuel Beckett" (10).

This theme has now been brought to the fore by Dr. Lidan Lin, Professor of English Literature at the Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, USA (& Visiting Professor of English literature at the Southwest University, China) by publishing a thought provoking article under the title "Samuel Beckett's Encounter with the East" in *English Studies*[6]. Professor Lin refers to Paul Foster identifying the prevailing theme of Beckett's novels as the "expression of a dilemma that is spiritual", arguing that the nature of the Beckettian impasse is the kind of impasse the Buddha set out to resolve. Foster contends that, "like the Buddhists, Beckett believes that the situation of suffering and dissatisfaction is brought about by desire… the basic motivation in all human beings for seeking satisfaction. Professor Lin affirms that "Beckett's solution, like the Buddhist one, is an "escape from the dilemma… by abandoning desire and all attachments to worldly gains."

Samuel Beckett's long essay on the French novelist, critic and essayist Marcel Proust (1871-1922) and another essay on "Henri Hayden, home-peintre" provide authentic evidence of his interest in Buddhism and Hinduism, - an interest evoked by continuing influence (indirect, if not direct) on him of the great German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), who had been greatly influenced by Oriental philosophy. Schopenhauer is known to have acknowledged that the truth was recognized by the sages of India, and as such his solutions to suffering were similar to those of the Vedantic and Buddhist thinkers. He considered Indian philosophy "the production of the highest human wisdom" and called the opening up of Sanskrit literature "the greatest gift of our century", and predicted that the philosophy and knowledge of the Upanishads would become the cherished faith of the West.

It must be of interest to an Indian reader to know that, despite his question "Where would I go, if I could go", Samuel Beckett was a tourist par excellence in the beautiful cities of Paris and London, was always

aware of Indian presence where he felt he could spot it. In his novel *Murphy* (published 1958), when the hero of the novel, viz. Murphy, is suffering the pangs of separation from his sweetheart Celia and is unable to live without her for long, he decides to get his horoscope prepared from a '*swami*' [an Indian saintly person, generally a self-styled astrologer] in Berwick Market [an iconic old, weird but vibrant London market with a rich heritage – having Indian shops providing hot traditional Indian cuisine, Indian sarees]. It is this horoscope which, once acquired from the '*swami'*, is found to decree that not before the first Sunday in 1956 … will Murphy be able to seek work with the maximum chance of success. Later, struck by a sudden congruence between two of the *swami*'s motifs, … he offers to join the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat (59).

Another point of interest to an Indian steeped in ancient Indian cultural traditions is that in this novel Beckett makes it a point to see that, to ensure greater accuracy and authenticity, the dates mentioned are never left vague and are matched with relevant planetary information. This is a trait very typical of the ancient Indian epics where too, for greater authenticity, the events are linked to planetary configurations. As is known, in the *Mahabharata* alone there are 150 instances where worldly events are mentioned along with the planetary positions in the sky. For instance, when Bhishma died, "it was the 8th day of the bright half of the month of Magha – a day when the moon was at the asterism Rohini and the day of Winter Solstice. On this day, there also appeared a comet at the asterism Pushya… The day on which Ghatotkacha, son of Bhima, died, the moon appeared at the horizon at 2.00 am. The epic also mentions the occurrence of a very rare astronomical event that took place prior to the War: three eclipses, two lunar and a solar, within a lunar month of 27 days.

I will end with a brief reference to a highly successful Indianized stage version of *Waiting for Godot.* I have written in detail about this production by *Mimesis* theatre group in my book on *Waiting for Godot*, *Indian Interpretation* published in 2004. Pradip Banerjee was the translator-adapter and the play entitled *Iswar Babu Aschen* was published by P. Lal, writers' workshop and is now out of print. Amitava Roy, who played the part of Pozzo (here called Haripada) and alternatively Vladimir (here called Godai) recollects "After our first production of *Waiting for Godot* in 1969 it was performed with quite some regularity between 1969 and 1975 – with as much regularity that a non-profit Bengali theatre group could muster Mimesis and Theatre Arts Workshops from the Shakespeare

Society of Eastern India got together to stage this play for over 6 years. No other group staged this play as many times as we did. An application of performance rights was sent to Samuel Beckett. Beckett was very magnanimous and himself replied saying that he had requested his agent to give us the performance rights. He asked us to go ahead as he was very happy to know that a Bengali theatre group from 10000 miles away was performing Wating for Godot. He assured us that there won't be any problem and part of this note by Beckett has been included in the Writers' Workshop publication. Beckett got the Nobel Prize in 1969 and our play was regularly performed for over 6 years till 1975 making Beckett a household name in Bengal.

I would usually play Pozzo as my physical build, shape and my personality appears to be very dominating. Our production required a very high degree of physicalization. On the surface the play is very verbal, but the non-verbal action under the surface required a lot of body and bounce, where the body itself becomes a metaphor in action.

The play was a transcreation adapted into the Bengali ethos. Not only were the names changed – Bhuto, Godai, Nibaron, Haripada – the text also use Tagore songs that embodied the meaning of the scenes and actions and situation the characters found themselves in. The media hailed it as a landmark Asian production of Beckett.

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(Footnotes)

1. Nobel Prize Committee citation - The Nobel Prize in Literature 1969 – nobelprize.org the official website of the Nobel Prize.
2. Award ceremony speech by Karl RagnarGierow of the Swedish Academy - nobelprize.org the official website of the Nobel Prize.
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4. Information collected from standard bibliographies of dissertations - e.g. (a) Lawrence F.McNamee. *Dissertations in English & American literature; theses accepted by American, British& German universities*; (b) Gernot W. Gabel & Gisela R. Gabel. *Dissertations in English & American literature; theses accepted by Austrian, French & Swiss universities etc*
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Feminine Being and Existence: A Study of Adrienne Rich's Poems

Rupsa Mukherjee Banerjee

Men and women are tied to the politics of sex. A man's sexuality is always visible, always constructed to speak loud and clear over woman's sexuality. In his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and The State* (1884), Engels stated that capitalism inflicted a great oppression on women as it strengthened the division of class between men and women. Women form the base and they are supposed to advance ways that fulfill the aim of those in power, that is, men. Women and their bodies thus become 'docile', (Foucault's concept) susceptible to patriarchal suppression and oppression. A woman is under constant surveillance and patriarchal regulations what, in a subtle manner, can be termed as 'discipline'(Foucault). This discipline creates the patriarchal individualization of female body that is under full patriarchal control. Patriarchy imposes discipline on female bodies through prescribed movements, codes and conduct and tactics. The female body becomes the basis of attention. The torture of female body becomes the sole objective of patriarchal discourse to impose disciplinary forces that can have full control over female body.

The patriarchal strategies are imbibed in woman's mind through Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser's concept) in order to situate the female body within strict patriarchal disciplinary discourses. The individuality of a woman is always and already interpellated. Through constant socialization and disciplinary activities, women internalize the patriarchal concept of docility and seek to turn towards feminine gendered roles – meek, mild and full of mystery, always in need of a man for the appropriation of her sexuality. This brings us to the patriarchal concept of *lack* in woman's body. According to Freud, a girl comes to know about her lack in the oedipal stage when she comes to feel that she is castrated by

birth and her clitoris, unable to claim the legacy of fatherhood, is only a very short representation of the penis. The girl turns around from her mother, blames her for the lack she has in her body and turns towards her father. Freud argues that this is the course of heterosexuality a girl's psyche takes up. Freud's theory follows the concept of biological determinism and says that any woman who resists female passivity (femininity) is thought to suffer from neurotic disorder (Mazumdar 38-39). This is what feminists oppose. Nancy Chodorow in her book *The Reproduction of Mothering* argues that woman's passivity is not a pure biological thing but the result of the social construction of women as mother (Mazumdar 38-39).

The social construction of women's heterosexuality has also been challenged by Adrienne Rich in her essay; "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" where she says that for women heterosexuality is not an option that has been chosen by them willingly, but it is something that has been imposed on them through constant force, organization, ideologies, discourses and propaganda (Gelpi 216). This happens to be a mandatory step to make a woman feel that she is "'innately' heterosexual" (Gelpi 217). Heterosexuality is also a social constriction for women as passivity is. The conjoined term 'heterosexual passivity' can be used to define patriarchal politics to curb woman's sexuality. The singularity of the phallus is always imposed on woman's sexuality through subtle ideologies. But this hegemonic construction of the phallus is broken down by Irigaray in her essay, "This Sex Which Is Not One" . Irigaray comments about the plurality of female sexuality; that sex of a woman is not confined to any singular mass of flesh but is *diffused* everywhere in the body of a woman. A man has a monosexual body, while a woman has a polysexual body. A woman is capable of satisfying another woman (mentally and physically) with greater intensity than a man can do with his penis only. A girl's intimate relationship with her mother in the pre-symbolic stage represents homosexuality that is transformed into a compulsory heterosexual behavior through constant grooming. Adrienne Rich negates this zone of compulsory heterosexuality. She says that 'lesbian continuum' (Gelpi 217) is the right term that can be used to express woman's experience through proper survey of every woman's life. Lesbianism happens to be a direct negation of male tyranny; it is 'an act of resistance' (Gelpi 217). Adrienne Rich challenged the 'normative' heterosexual notion with her idea of lesbianism. This seeks reference to Kristeva's idea of the semiotics. The initiation of language in child's mind is supposed to be the beginning of

the symbolic stage and the stage before the symbolic one is the semiotic stage where the patriarchal linear language has not still invaded the child's mind. For Kristeva, this semiotic state plays a vital role in forming the personality of a child. The attachment of a child with its mother is of primary importance in the semiotic stage. The subconscious always gets interrupted with the maternal semiotic chora (Mciver, Diss. 22). Interplay as well as a disruption from the semiotic phase takes place when the symbolic phase occurs. The revelry within the semiotic stage is the supreme concern of Rich's poems. The personal self of a woman loves to dwell in the semiotic stage; the woman in her poetry loves to be one with the other female self that is there within her psyche and looks down upon the linear symbolic state that always puts the law of the man in high order. The semiotic stage brings forth a wild arena of untold words, scattering memories, stories and myths that reverberates the collective experiences of women (Diehl). The first few lines of the poem "Diving into the Wreck" (*Diving Into The Wreck: Poems 1971-1972)* goes:

> First having read the book of myths,
> and loaded the camera,
> and checked the edge of the knife-blade,
> I put on
> the body-armor of black rubber
> the absurd flippers
> the grave and awkward mask.
>
> (Lines 1-7)

Here 'the book of myths' refers to the psychic images of the semiotic stage where the poet shared a keen relationship with her mother. The word 'black' refers to subconscious that tries to ooze out from beneath the 'absurd flippers' and 'awkward mask'— signifiers of the absurdity and awkwardness masculinity has for femininity. The 'ocean' in the poem refers to the semiotic psyche that every woman wants to explore in order to find her true self. The semiotic stage is 'ocean', 'sea', a 'deep element', the 'wreck' that Rich is trying to explore. The 'ladder' in the second stanza of the poem refers to the reminiscence of pre-symbolic stage that forms the basis for the search of the inner self. The structured language of symbolic stage curbs the events of the semiotic stage. The self resides only within the boundaries of patriarchal linguistic hegemony that speaks only of linearity. Part of the semiotic stage gets bruised and battered under the force of symbolic. A stereotypical mindset would never go for 'diving'

into this 'wreck'; Rich is keen to 'explore the wreck' and see 'the damage that was done and the treasures that prevail'. The homosexual love and tenderness (for mother) remains still there in the poet's heart and she is longing for the actual pre-symbolic personality—the 'wreck and not the story of the wreck'. The idea of women as community; women as partners comes in the last stanza when Rich says:

> We are, I am, you are
> by cowardice or courage
> the one who find our way
> back to this scene
> carrying a knife, a camera
> a book of myths
> in which
> our names do not appear.

(Lines 87-94)

The reference to androgynous existence is explicit in the line 'I am she: I am he' where the poet might have hinted at the dual role of masculinity and femininity a lesbian body performs as opposed to the concept of normative heterosexuality that teaches woman to reveal the 'womanly attitudes' only.

In *The Dark Room,* R. K. Narayan threw light on the problematic condition of the woman who is totally absent in her household, in spite of being totally present. Commodification, laborisation and saleability of her uneconomic, unrecognized labor in the household make her like a bamboo tree in the family where she cannot stand without the supportive wall of her husband. In context of her material ownership, Savitri cannot even feel her children to be her very own. Materialist feminism defiles the male concept of laborisation of women in the household as natural and opines that this capitalist mentality of extracting the surplus from a woman should be meted out by giving her social and economic fertility. Materialist feminists like Mary MacIntosh, Annette and Christine Delphy blamed Marxism for not very aptly and adequately referring to the exploitation, suppression and oppression of women as the basis of the theory. Materialist feminists want a transformation – a transformation in the attitude and action of women to perceive this world as their own. Adrienne Rich believed in transformation; an all-pervading transformation that will culminate in writing and go through and beyond writing. In her 1971 essay, "When We

Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision", she talks succinctly of imaginative transformation. Imagination is reality for her; reality to transcend as well as transform experience. For her, then, the word 'transformation' is political and public. Materialist feminism also talks of this political transformation where women have to raise their voice for their material recognition. Rich's poetry is a call for unity of women trapped under the hegemonizing patriarchal system.

"Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" (from *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law: Poems 1954-1962)* portrays the objectification of women and slavery of womenfolk within the four walls of patriarchy. The idea of a woman as household and sexual labor comes out in the lines:

> Your mind now, moldering like wedding-cake,
> Heavy with useless experience, rich
> with suspicion, rumor, fantasy,
> crumbling to pieces under the knife-edge
> of near fact. In the prime of your life.
> ("Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law", Part-I, Lines 7-11)

Complete materialization and exploitation takes place when a woman's mind and body get captured by a man and is treated as secondary object. The woman gets 'nervy', and 'wipes the teaspoons' and grows under complete manipulation of the *homme.* A Machiavellian dictatorship engulfs woman's womanhood where she is reduced to merely a *second* sex, signifying a materialist object.

Different kinds of discourses conjoin themselves on body to contest and enact accordingly for power (Mills 81).The body of the daughter-in-law is suffering from enslavement much in the way her mother-in-law has suffered earlier. She 'shaves her legs until they gleam/like petrified mammoth-tusk). The song she is singing is not 'her own'. Even the word she is uttering is not speaking about her own self. She sings to satisfy the ego of a man, to earn the name of 'The Angel in the House' (Virginia Woolf's version); she is trapped in the temporality and spatiality of male hegemony. A woman is on all occasions the *other* in the field of men (as opined by Simone de Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex)* (Humm 33). Adrienne Rich gave a clarion call to all women to *save* themselves from getting 'other'ed and submitting their femininity to male dominance. The reference to angels in the second part of the poem gives the intonation of the *female* self that is chiding the motivated patriarchal self of the woman;

the *female* within the mind and the body wants to be set free. In her book *The Feminine Mystique,* Betty Friedan talks about the private ennui and angst that many middleclass women fell prey to during the late 1950s as unpaid house makers and consumers (Humm 39). This is 'the problem that has no name'; a 'mystique' that every woman was suffering from at that time. This resulted in psychological distress for women. They had no financial support of their own but went on to provide unaccounted labor for their houses. The women in "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" represent that psychic distress where there is a problem but there is no name to it. Herein comes the issue of female-bonding (lesbian continuum);

> Sigh no more, ladies.
> Time is male
> ("Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law", Part-9, Lines 95-96)

The poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" [from *A Change of World* (1951)] speaks of female *jouissance.* The term *jouissance*, as used by Hélène Cixous, refers to any form of a woman's pleasure that she gets not only in engaging herself in a physical relationship with another woman, but all the mental, emotional and spiritual desires and female experiences that border on the mystical and primordial, limitless, explosive, diffusive and abundant communion among women.*Jouissance* gives birth to female creativity; the suppression of this *jouissance* leads to disturbed personality and mental and spiritual blockage.This *jouissance* is never complete if the woman as a poet (writer) only took bliss in writing a poem and couldnot connect with the wide variety of women waiting outside to enjoy *plaisir* (pleasure). A text should be pleasurable enough to connect with the readers and treat the readers as providing meaning to the text rather than as passive recipients of only the meanings provided by the writer. According to Barthes, (in his book *S/Z*) there are two types of texts – *lisible* (readerly) and *scriptible* (writerly) texts. A text is created not only to provide a cathartic effect to the writer but, the readers can also act as subjects in the meaning-making of the text. Roland Barthes divides the effect of a text into two parts — *jouissance* (bliss) and *plaisir* (pleasure). A nice confluence of the poet's *jouissance* with the readers' *plaisir* can only give rise to a spiritual lesbian orgasmic cathartic effect that will stand powerfully to oppose all sorts of male hegemonic attitudes. Female confessional poetry then should be always *lisible* texts, connecting the poet with the readers and treating each one of them as equal participants in the meaning-making of the text.

Aunt Jennifer finds a spiritual and mental pleasure in knitting 'bright topaz' tigers that are 'denizens of a world of green'. The subconscious gets a full bloom on the knitting cloth and the tigers signify all the suppressed desires that rule Aunt Jennifer's heart. Now, the ivory needle gave Aunt Jennifer the power to write her mode of language in a pleasurable manner. 'Bright topaz' is the color of female *jouissance.* For Aunt Jennifer, knitting is a pleasurable act, more pleasurable than holding her husband's penis in between her labia. Uncle Jennifer's wedding band signifies patriarchal constrains that tightly tie up and suppress her's *jouissance*. Eventually she let her 'terrified hands' free from all constraints and make her *jouissance* flourish, 'proud and unafraid'. All of Rich's poems are *lisible* texts that allows us, the readers, to connect with the *jouissance* of the poet and produce plaisir, a sense of common interest and sisterhood among all women in the world striving to enjoy freedom outside the male world.

In her essay "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" (1977), Audre Lorde, an Afro-American lesbian poet has remarked that for a woman, poetry is not a genre to be used very casually. Poetry is going to free women from their womanly impotency and reveal their dark places that got suppressed under the pressure of male discourses. Poetry is not only about free flow of imagination but a revelry of woman's self through distillation of their experiences (Gilbert 223-224). Lorde succinctly talks about the importance of poetry in a woman's life. In fact, the semiotic is always dark and ancient that all women, irrespective of their skin color, should try to explore. Poetry is to be etched not to hide one but to reach out and explore the *female* self. Every woman's poetry is a sort of confession then, a sort of self- assertion of one's life over death. Adrienne Rich, in her essay, "Someone is writing a poem", says that words act like a force-field for women, they are endowed with magnetic forces. A woman is free to use words and syntax according to her need and knowledge of the self, based on her self-reliance, perception, doubts and historical basis. Each phrase, each pause, each decision that a poet makes can only have a possible meaning if the readers are able to connect themselves with the thoughts of the words and lines produced by the poet. The images created by the words and phrases should have the capacity to bend the readers' mind so that they can think about nascent arenas. The written language should itself become the canvas of the evolving mind (Rich, *What Is Found There* 87-88).

De-mystification of the symbolic order is what is needed by female poets. This is exactly what Adrienne Rich has done in her poem "Waking in the Dark" (from *Diving into theWreck: Poems 1971-1972).* De-mystification of the 'Angel in the House' occurs right at the onset of the poem. The woman says that she is trying to love her husband but cannot love. Sex has been transformed into a tragedy for both of them:

> The tragedy of sex
> lies around us, [. . .]
> ("Waking in the Dark", Part-3, Lines 31–32)

The woman is very tired in trying to satisfy her man and willing to break free from her long and fatigued task of monotonous sexual attempts. Then suddenly, sprouts of subconscious crept in where the *mode* of language in the poem breaks its symbolic syntactical linearity and becomes de-polarized. It seems to project certain flashbacks from the semiotic phase and rules out the essentiality of speaking 'perfectly':

> Clarity,
> Spray
> blinding and purging
> spears of sun striking the water
> the bodies riding the air
> like gliders
> the bodies in slow motion
> falling
> into the pool
> at the Berlin Olympics
> control; loss of control
> the bodies rising
> arching back to the tower
> time reeling backward
> clarity of open air
> before the dark chambers
> with the shower-heads
> the bodies falling again
> freely
> faster than light
> the water opening
> like air
> like realization

A woman made this film
Against
the law
of gravity

("Waking in the Dark", Part-4, Lines 52 – 78)

This is a woman's *mode* of language—broken and incorrect use of grammar and syntax; woman's *mystery* has been de-mystified here and woman's fluidity has been given wings to flourish, voice to speak loud of her multiple *jouissance.* Man can find pleasure through writing only in one pattern —a grammatically and syntactically correct pattern. They are not obliged to write in a de-syntactical format. But Rich has shown that women, having multiple pleasure zones in their bodies can write in a de-polarized pattern.

In her essay, "This Sex Which Is Not One" (1978), Irigaray says that a woman's sexuality is always *plural* (Irigaray 440).The pleasure of vaginal caress does not create the same type of pleasure as a clitoral caress will give. So a woman is always in the space of plurality of pleasures. There are multiple pleasure zones in a woman's body as opposed to a man's singular penis that can only enjoy complete pleasure within the vagina when the walls of the vagina rub the penis. The touching of the breasts gives a different kind of sensation that is different from caressing the vulva and touching the lips. Again, the sensation in and around the cervix gives a different sort of pleasure. The lips are in constant touch within a woman's body, thus giving a different kind of sensation to the body; a woman can experience pleasure within herself without the touch of a penis as she has got multiple pleasure zones in her body that allow her to enjoy her own body in a greater extent than a man can do through masturbation. A woman is endowed with carrying sex organs in each and every part of her body. The extent of a woman's pleasure is different and diversified and cannot be explained with a single word or line. "The Images" by Adrienne Rich (in the collection of poems *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*) talks about the multiplicity of women's sexuality:

My hand half-sleeping reaches, finds
some part of you, touch knows you before language
names in the brain.

(Lines 3-5)

The desire of the daughter for the mother does not get diverted towards the father but it subsides into the subconscious and peeps in from the symbolic phase to claim its primary space. Two women can sleep together and enjoy more pleasure than a woman can do with a man. The defense mechanism in a lesbian relationship is tougher than a heterosexual relationship:

> […] Two women sleeping
> Together have more than their sleep to defend.
>
> ("The Images", Lines 17-18)

Female caress and solidarity project uniqueness though Rich's hands in the lines:

> And what can reconcile me
> that you, the woman whose hand
> sensual and protective, brushes me in sleep,
>
> (Lines 19-21)

Lesbianism does not solely refer to enjoyment of one female body by another female body; it means psychic *jouissance*.

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments,* Kierkegaard opines that subjectivity is synonymous with truth. Nowhere did he claim that this subjectivity is limited to men only. It becomes the politics of male-centric world to create the man/woman, subject/object binaries to suppress women. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, argued against this cultural hegemony of patriarchy that sees women as 'Other'. Existentialism negates the cultural phenomenon of man/woman binary and talks of search for the self, the subjectivity of the female self and the passion for searching the subjectivity within. That is what Adrienne Rich has tried to do. This search cannot be complete without the union of the soul with the archaic mother figure. Abiding by the law of the father and hatred for the mother figure is induced by continual therapy of patriarchy that schools the girl to form her subjectivity through non-recognition of the archaic mother. The archaic mother figure is Julia Kirsteva's semiotic chora. It is the task of feminist activists, poets and theorists like Rich, Kristeva and Ettinger to make women go back and delve deep into the archaic semitotic chora. If somenone got to know the archaic Mother, she would grab hold of herself. But that is not easy; images overlap within the subconscious. Images of many 'non-I'-s overlap, providing an amazing arena of 'lesbian continuum' within the subconscious.

Still, this search of the self can never be stopped. Rich is the torch-bearer of women worldwide wriggling in pain in this big bad patriarchal world.

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A Discourse on Female Desire, Anger and Hysteria in Anita Desai's C*ry*, *the Peacock*

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Anita Desai in *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) brings forth into limelight a discourse on female desire, anger and hysteria through the language of the senses revealed in the instinctive drive of desire, fantasy and hallucination of the female protagonist, Maya. Female desire - the 'unrepresentable' in literary works, a taboo in a patriarchal society is explored in the novel through fantasy and musings upon rhythms and symbols of the world of male and female papaya plants, through the cry and dance of the peacock for rain and for its mate. The novelist questions the pseudo masculine culture and the double standard moral codes of patriarchy which reduce women to abnormality in action and thinking. Anita Desai reproduces a language of the instinct, madness and anger to depict an emotionally disturbed woman who is alienated, introspective and hypersensitive. The paper endeavours to highlight the repressed life of a married woman who is devoid of sensual and emotional fulfilment, fluttering hopelessly like a caged bird in an attempt to make her presence felt and her desire made visible through the language of the senses - touch, sight, sound etc. The creation of a hysterical woman, suffering from psychosis is not to discredit either the woman author or the female character but to emphasize on the link between them as such a distinct female identity is also a part of the ever-flowing fountain of feminine consciousness which has been placed under repression for a long time.

The paper aims at highlighting issues of female desire, anger and hysteria as integral parts of a discourse Anita Desai experiments with through the language of the senses revealed in the instinctive drives of desire, fantasy and hallucination of the protagonist, Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*. The novelist explores 'female desire' – a taboo in a patriarchal society, something which has been the 'unrepresentable' in literary works

– to assert women's right to pleasure which undercuts the Freudian notion that libido is masculine only. The novelist approaches 'anger' – a timeless emotion, seen as a result of provocation, actual or imagined by something or someone for causing wrong/hurt to oneself – as a form of rebellion to speak the female body and the female mind. The novelist introduces 'hysteria' – a mental condition characterised by uncontrollable emotion and behaviour, which is taken to be a lie, a fiction, an invention of the imagination of a neurotic mind – through the emotional outbursts, provocative and violent action, unstable speech and even nervous fits of the protagonist.

These highly subjective issues are studied through an alienated hypersensitive, introspective and morbid woman character who, instead of voicing her problems openly, withdraws into herself repressing emotional/ sexual impulses to such an extent that she becomes an angry hysteric. The appearance of angry and hysteric or neurotic women in women-authored texts creating different/alternative/fragmented identities of women show that the ever-flowing fountain of feminine consciousness which has been kept under repression for a long time has tremendous possibilities of creativity and that every space/area either of the female body or of the female mind can become subject matters in women writing. The projection of mad women in women-authored texts can also be a way of revising patriarchal definition of women through anger, rebellion and refusal to conform to the values and norms created, developed and designed by men. To respect women in various shades and colors, moods and moments in order to assert women's alternative lives, Anita Desai shapes a new female identity through the angry hysteric Maya who defies patriarchal notions of feminine identity.

What Hélène Cixous puts forward in "The Laugh of the Medusa" urging women writers to "Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resourse of the unconscious spring forth" (350-351) – is exactly what Anita Desai does in the novel experimenting with the language of senses – of touch, sight, sound; through the ways of expression and thinking of an emotionally/psychologically disturbed woman, forceful in her own unique and unthought of ways. The starting point of *écriturefeminine*, according to feminist critic Maggie Humm is "that women's actual physical desires, if represented in writing, might constitute a counter language" (97). Whether the desires are unconscious or conscious but repressed (for fear of shame and criticism, for feeling guilty); when it

comes to expressing these in language, a counter language or an alternative discourse which disrupts the syntax becomes compulsory. It is just as Julia Kristeva posits – "Feminine sexual pleasure (*Jouissance*) cannot be expressed in the symbolic or linguistic rules" (Humm 97). Therefore 'slips of the tongue', dreams which manifest hidden desires/fears, body signs/ language as if one is on the verge of throwing oneself into the text physically, silences and breaks in the sentence using ellipses (…), fragments of words or incomplete words as if one cannot find exact terms to convey all the meaning one wishes to divulge – all these become crucial for an alternative discourse to express female desire, female mind and female body.

The paper endeavours to bring into centre-stage, the repressed life of a married woman who is deprived of emotional/sensual fulfilment, fluttering helplessly like a caged bird in an attempt to make her presence – physical and mental, felt and desire visible through the world of the senses which are reflected in her musings upon the symbolic word of the male and female papaya plants, her fantasy about rhythms of the dance and cry of the peacock for rain and for its mate and her hallucination about wild horses galloping, of danger, of falling etc. Any discourse on female desire though initiated long ago, is still positioned outside the accepted realm of normality in various cultures just as hysteria is mostly considered an abnormal/unnatural ailment specific to women.

The issue of female desire is brought in very early in the text when the young wife's thought is laid bare in open, "But then, he knew nothing that concerned me … Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the *soft, willing body or the lonely, wanting* mind that waited near his bed" [italics mine] (9). Being a cold and detached person by nature, unromantic or impotent as he shows no sexual response or physical attraction to his wife who visibly reveals desire, too engrossed in his reading; Gautum fails to fulfil the intuitive demands and expectations of his wife. Female sexuality is one of the issues women writers strongly take up emphasising women's right to pleasure and its open expression in a natural and bold manner. Reference may be made to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's*The Forest of Enchantments* which revises Sita of the epic as a woman who is aware of her awakening sexuality. One such instance where Sita expresses her view on sexuality is quoted here: "What I enjoyed as much as the physical pleasures of love was the time afterwards, when Ram and I lay limbs intertwined, heads on the same pillow, and conversed into the night. Darkness added a special

intimacy to the moment (66). If Maya could have lived such a life of physical and emotional fulfilment, her problems would have lessened but Gautum's inability to relive life in physical terms with her has extinguished the flame of life as a great deal of her happiness depends upon fulfilment of sensual needs as she already is haunted by the fear of death predicted in her horoscope. Intense awareness of life and longing for a sensuous life even when haunted by the fear of death makes her identity herself with the agitated peacock's cry at night for monsoon rain and for its mate. In myths it is said that the peahen gets pregnant by drinking the tears of the peacock and that a peacock can foretell monsoon and so it cries while dancing for rain. It is also believed that too much cry of a peacock forewarns the death of a person. In reality peacocks are polygamous birds that who may leave a mate once mating is over. The peacocks spread their tail feathers and dance to attract peahens. Whether Maya believes in myth or in reality, her fascination with peacock's cry that agitates her (because of its association with desire and death) disturbs her troubled psyche as it mirrors her silent cry for love, for companionship and for attention. Filled with unfulfilled desire, anxiety, restlessness, anger and fear, Maya is propelled towards a journey of psychic disintegration in the long run because she is highly sensitive and introspective who feels more acutely life's ups and downs.

In an interview with Jasbir Jain, Anita Desai talks about her characters stressing that "solidarity and introspective people are always very aware of living on the brink" and that they are "more aware than others are of what lies on the other side" (10). If Maya could express her openly, if she could act out that desire/passion whether conscious or unconscious, she would not have remained a passive receiver of male desire waiting for male gaze and male response but rather become a subject who acts out the desire itself who can acknowledge her desire just like her male counterpart. But traditionally in closed cultures female sexuality is located in a male made world, full of taboos that deny the expression of female desire, thereby preventing her from speaking the truth about her body and her experience making her feel desire as shameful and dangerous. When Kamala Das in the poem "An Introduction" compares male desire to the hungry river and female desire to the waiting ocean, she restates the traditional views on desire which assigns specific places to male and female desire: "In him … the hungry haste/Of rivers, in me … the oceans' tireless/ waiting" (46-48).

When Maya asks for involvement, attachment, romance and sensual

life, Gautam preaches about detachment on every count and of logic and philosophy of Hinduism. Thus, her desire to live life to the brim bears no fruit for want of expression and reciprocation and so she laments, broken heartedly. "He taught it pain for there were countless nights when I had been tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect, of loneliness, of desperation that would have not existed had I not loved him so, had he meant not so much, … 'Why should I love him? I wish I did not!'" (201). As a woman who dreams of a romantic and blissful conjugal life with the concomitants of passion, sharing and complete absorption in each other's life, Maya finds it hard to accept the fact that her marriage is only a contract between her father and her husband in which love and romance have no place and that her dream would remain only a rainbow dream. When it becomes too much for her to bear the aridity of a life without love, the emotional sterility of her married life and thealienation his nature, behaviour and temperament forces on her; she raises her voice in anger and accuses him, "Oh, you know nothing, understand nothing … Nor will you ever understand. You know nothing of me – and of how I can love. How I *want* to love. How it is *important* to me" (112).

The repetition of words – 'nothing', 'understand', 'love', 'How' is to focus on the force of the speaking person, to emphasize the sense of frustration the speaker experiences and the break in the sentence shown through use of ellipses (…) and dash (-) is to break away from the logical structure of symbolic language as the subject being talked about is 'love' which the woman 'wants' and about ways to love – 'how'? Gathering her courage after remaining mute for a long time about her female desire and after waiting for male response, Maya finally and openly talks about love, its physical as well as emotional aspects and needs but her plea and her anger fall on deaf ears as Gautum is unresponsive. Still, refusing to quietly sit down and bow to his detached mindset she decides to hold him down, "Tonight I would hold him down beside me" (113).

There are numerous instances in the novel where Maya thinks about and expresses her female desire. Thinking "of a peace that comes from companion life alone, from brother flesh" (18), Maya lies in bed waiting for him to join her, "I turned upon my side, closer to him, conscious of the swell of my hip that rose under the white sheet which fill in sculptured folds about my rounded form. His eyes remained blank of appraisal, of any response" (42). Consciousness of her own physical desires has made her feel bold and open about her passion, thinking about and imagining

their union night after night – "In a sudden, impulsive longing to be with him, be close to him, I leapt up, full of decisions to make haste in undressing, preparing myself, then joining him at last," (93). The above quoted lines bear full testimony to the expression of female desire as legitimate and as normal as male desire which is no longer to be suppressed challenging the notion that female sexuality is repressed by guilt, doubt and for being dangerous. Freud's argument that masculine sexuality "is untroubled and aggressive; it is not repressed or disrupted by guilt and doubt as is feminine sexuality" (Strong 16) in undercut by the novelist.

Maya's musings about the papaya plants which reveals her passionate longing for Gautum is a full discourse on female desire:

> … then the papaya tree in itself … I contemplated that, smiling with pleasure at the thought of those long streamers of bridal flowers that flow out of the core of the female papaya tree and twine about her slim trunk, and the firm, wax-petalled blossoms that leap directly out of the solid trunk of the male… (92)

The above question is charged with sexual imagery, terms like 'long streamers', 'bridal', 'flow out', 'twine about', 'solid trunk' etc have sexual connotations making it clear that female desire when expressed overflows. Maya's musings mirror Hélène Cixous' exclamations, "I, too, overflow: my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard of songs. Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst ..." (348). A lot of women writers and feminist critics have approached this issue of female sexuality claiming women's right to their own bodies and its pleasures. Nicole Dennis-Behn in the essay "Unapologetic" asserts: "A woman has the right to her own body . . . a woman has the right to express herself sexually and still be in control of what happens to her body" (28).

Nevertheless, such behaviour would be considered outrageous and obsessive as it is almost beyond the comprehension of normal human understanding to seek and find pleasure in imagining the sexual life of plants. The writer's one of the many feminist agendas is to trace the steps/ issues which make a woman like Maya a prey to violence and madness after living in a chaotic world of male indifference where individual woman's pursuit never reaches a goal. Finding an alternative discourse where women can speak their mind and body such as the discourse of female desire could be one way of making sure that women preserve sanity in the face of the double standard moral codes and the pseudo-

masculine culture of Indian patriarchal system in general which reduce women to abnormality in thinking and action.

To voice feminine discontent, to express views and opinions, anger becomes a double-edged weapon in the hands of the protagonist who uses it as a response to provocations heaped on her sensitive psyche. She is a fine example of the silent but angry rebel victims and releases pent up emotions of anger through acts of violence, sobs and shouts, speaking in fits and starts, sudden march into a gathering uninvited etc. However, anger should be used in a positive way i.e. constructive if one has to effectively utilise it to fight one's own battles. For a person like Maya who suffers from want of love, affection and attention, one who is already morbid, it becomes a dangerous tool not only for others but for herself too as it is provoked. Maya does not consciously choose anger as her weapon to wage war against Gautum's failure to fulfil her emotional/physical/sensual longings but rather it becomes a means to make him acknowledge her presence, her mind and her body and thus respond to her accordingly.

The novel is replete with incidents where Maya becomes angry due to his indifference, marginalisation of her presence and mind, his condescending attitude towards her inviting her angry reaction at much rejection and isolation of the female self, questioning and defying patriarchal construction of femininity as meek, passive, shy etc. On the night of the death of her pet dog, unable to reconcile herself with her personal loss and ever dismayed at Gautam's lack of sympathy and refusal to speak a word of comfort to soothe her pain, Maya starts talking about death trying to express her view and he calmly tells her, "You have done it again, Maya. You go Chattering like a monkey, and I am annoyed that I have been interrupted in my thinking" (16). Such insensitivity and egoism bring emotional violence to Maya as comparing her to a monkey while totally side-lining her present loss is total rejection of human status, logic and total disregard of her feelings and views.

In another incident Maya becomes visibly disturbed with anger because of his condescending look and denial of intellect in women when they discuss the philosophy of Hinduism like Karma, Faith, Vision, Logic etc. In her eagerness to share her opinion, Maya interrupts his preaching and he reacts, "'Now what is it?' He sighed, in utter disgust, 'Really it is quite impossible to talk to a woman'" (124). His tendency to impose his views on her expecting her to accept his opinions unchallengingly, his one-sided view that a woman lacks intellect, his utter disregard of her views – all of

which are hostile to basic human instincts, paves the way for her anger to turn destructive.

Maya's heart groans with pain and neglect when she is not invited to join the exclusive male gathering on the lawn filled with male laughter and jokes of her husband and his friends, where the smell of cigarette is mingled with lazy voices reciting and quoting Urdu poetry, intoxicated by the night itself. Rich words like 'Zulph', 'mehtab', 'tamanna' floated in the night air drowning other noises, pulls her with such a force that she rushes out in a fit of emotion to the lawn but unruffled as he is, Gautum calmly turns his back to her, talks to a friend, a glass in hand; totally ignoring her presence, misreading her interest as 'overbearing' nature of women. Marginalised in front of his friends as if to show that a woman even as wife has no business in the leisurely world of male exclusiveness and solidarity, angered at such attitude that belittles and humiliates her, disappointed at being excluded; Maya is left alone to ponder, "Was it so unforgivable to wish to share in human friendliness? In companionship?" (104). Here her anger finds no outlet for release which in the long run affects the mental health, especially of hypersensitive and introspective women like Maya. In another novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Anita Desai depicts a woman named Sita who having kept her anger pent up inside her for a long time finally utters a demand for the impossible - to keep her baby unborn and contained inside her as the outside world is too violent and too insensitive to receive an innocent child.

In another incident, Maya flings the white Jasmine buds against the mirror in anger as she identifies her life with the white, virginal and palpitating buds. This act is symbolic of her anger against Gautum's inability to comprehend her passion/desire, his impotency, cold-hearted nature. She also strikes at his absurd reflection in the mirror in anger when they discuss her father. These acts of foreshadow her final act of anger of pushing Gautam off the parapet of their house in order to do away with his ugly frame that casts a shadow between herself and the beauty of the captivating moon. Regardless of how anger can be a weapon to fight for self-assertion or express discontentment, if not channelled properly it becomes destructive as Maya succumbs to madness after pushing Gautam off the parapet.

Hysteria resists a simple definition because of its fluid or multifaceted nature. Tracing the usage and meaning of the term which has evolved historically and coming to the issue of its link with the female body, Beret

E. Strong talks about Michel Foucault's view. Having studied European medical texts of the 17th and 18th centuries which identify "hysteria as rooted in the female body and caused by the uterus, yet paradoxically difficult to define"(Strong 10), Foucault views hysteria as striking as those who have, quotes Strong, "neither the possibility of satisfying their desires nor the strength to master them" (13). This view hints at the link between hysteria and desire just as Freud sees hysteria "as a result of *repression* of sexual trauma or desire" (Strong 16). Some may link hysteria with the dysfunctional brain or with the reproductive organ or with humours or even with epilepsy or nervous fits, it basically is seen as abnormal and hence dangerous and to be feared. While discussing hysteria it is to be noted that it has been used historically to label any form of behavioural pattern/norm which deviates, "from the culturally determined norms of woman's health and behaviour" (Strong 11), as in the 19thcentury it had become a disorder associated with women that "makes her morally and otherwise responsible for her aberration from social and medical norms" (Strong).

Then it means that any sort of deviation from normally accepted norms in behaviour, action, personality or character traits would be considered as signs of hysteria which is also believed to affect every part of the body and human emotions. Regardless of how hysteria has been viewed or is regarded now, Anita Desai makes use of it to reveal the site of instincts and desires, anxiety and fear as an outlet for the unconscious outpouring of Maya. Her pent-up anger, frustration about female desire, tendency to neurotic behaviour are released through hysteria and hallucination. She, therefore, does not conform to the socially/culturally accepted image of womanhood and resists a defined concept of normality.

Disturbed by the idea of death, the day her pet died, Maya leaps from her chair in terror and in shock when Gautam casually talks about cremating the body. For Gautam burial ceremonies are meaningless which makes her feel that it does not matter to him whether people lived or died. When she insists that Burial and Cremation are facts of life, he calmly tells her that these do notmatter. Then she raises her voice sobbing and shouts, "'But how can you tell which facts matter?' I cried. 'I mean, how can you dictate? Oh, Gautam, pets mightn't mean anything to you, and yet they mean the world to me.'" (16). Hysterical speech – sobbing, shouting, crying and angry at Gautam – reveals a mind which has begun to take a turn towards irrational forces of life.

Having lived for four long years with a person who has remained blind, deaf and dumb to her muted and spoken demands for fulfilment of sexual needs, for recognition of mind/intellect in a woman, for sharing his emotional world; her mind is now overcome by anger and frustration and has now taken an inward turn, withdrawing into herself. While representing this female mental state – the chaotic mind's fears, obsessions, unfulfilled wishes, anger, frustration, a language that embodies this particular mental state and the danger of a neurotic mind is needed:

> Wild horse, white horse, galloping up paths of stone, flying away into the distance, the wild hills. The heights, the dizzying heights of my mountains….Fall, fall gloriously fall to the bed of racing rivers, foaming seas. Horrid arms, legs, tentacles thrashing, blood flowing, eyes glazing – storm at sea, at land! Fury, whip, lash. Fly furiously. Danger Danger! The warning reigns and echoes, from far, far, far. Run and run, run and hide – if you can, miserable fool! Ha, ha. Fool, fool, fool. (180-181)

Repetition of words, commas, imageries of fear, danger, physical pain, mental instability, disassociated ideas, hysterical laughter, high-pitched voice, words rushing into each other – all these reveal the turmoil within her mind. The above passage bears testimony to the hallucinations of a hysterical mind, and the language itself renders voice to a woman's intuitive, imaginative and perceptive world of sounds, sights, smell; speaking in illogical and disjunctive way and in shifting speeches which nevertheless express the very pulsations of life. Such language, thus, gives expression to women's split self-revealing the flickering mind under mental duress. What Elizabeth Grosz observes maybe cited in connection with Maya's hysteria: "Hysteria is a somatisation of psychical conflict, an acting out of resistance rather than its verbal articulation or conceptual representation. It is, according to Freud, a largely feminine neurosis" (302). The unstable identity of a woman such as Maya's identity as a hysteric serves the purpose of self-expression but it has failed to give sustenance to life as her final act of doing away with Gautam's life shows that hysteria has finally overcome sanity and rationality and that it culminates in her total nervous breakdown. The projection of mad women by the writer in both *Cry, the Peacock* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* can be seen as a way of revising patriarchal definition of femininity and sexuality through anger, rebellion and hysteria. It can also be a way of coming to terms with, to borrow Gilbert and Gubar's view on nineteenth century women authors:

". . . their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be" (78). Women have always felt ambiguous about their identities due to this existing discrepancy between their actual selves and the perceived selves in a patriarchal society which may create disturbances in their sensitive psyche.

Anita Desai's protagonist compels us to review expectations and norms in and about human nature and to reinterpret values and notions in human relationships so that life continues in a positive vein. The different fragments of Maya's identity or alternative identities shown through the novelist's experiment with language of female desire, anger and hysteria hint at the emergence of a feminine consciousness which differs from traditional female behaviour and mind.

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Dismemberment of history and subjectivity In Postmodern Fiction

Premanjana Banerjee

Teresa de Lauretis writes that woman within the patriarchal system is a fictional construct, a distillate from diverse but congruent discourses (critical and scientific, literary or juridical), dominant in Western culture, which works as both their vanishing point and their specific condition of existence. Similarly woman as the other-of-man (nature and Mother, site of sexuality and masculine desire, sign and object of men's social exchange) is the term that designates at once the vanishing point of our culture's fiction of itself and the condition of the discourses in which the fictions are represented. For there would be no myth without a princess to be wedded or a sorceress to be vanquished, no cinema without the attraction of the image to be looked at, no desire without an object, no kinship without incest, no science without nature, no society without sexual difference. (De Lauretis p5)

However beyond these mythologized characters remain real historical beings not yet defined outside these discursive formations, but whose material existence is nonetheless certain. Postmodern fiction too in its portrayal of subjectivity often loses itself in mythologies, fantasies magic realism, fairytales and speculative fiction. If on the one hand historiographic metafiction speaks powerfully about *real* political and historical realities, on the other hand one cannot deny the fact that while the object of realism is to make history graspable, the object of postmodernism is to ask whether history is at all graspable. And in this incessant interrogation and existence in *difference,* the subject situated in history, through whom history is re-engendered, arguably undergoes a dismemberment or an alienation from the very historical identities it had set out to establish. While on the one hand historiographic metafiction uses the great subversive potential of parody, speaking the language of the dominant (which allows you to be

heard), and then subverting it through ironic strategies of exaggeration, understatement, or literalization; on the other hand since the poststructuralist nature of postmodernism involves the infinite displacement of hierarchical binary oppositions, the feminist and the postcolonial critic aiming at substantive social transformation or revolution often find themselves with inadequate power to reflect and revise dominant power structures. Toni Morrison for example would prefer a novel like *Beloved* (1987) which can also be read as historiographic metafiction to be placed within an African-American tradition of social protest. She has spoken out against a postmodernism that she associates with Jameson's terms, saying that her investments in agency, presence, and the resurrection of *authentic* history, makes the novel incompatible with the poststructuralist ideas at the root of postmodernism.

Beloved is set against the troubled years following the Civil War in America. The spirit of a murdered child haunts the Ohio home of a former slave. This angry, destructive ghost breaks mirrors, leaves its fingerprints in cake icing, and generally makes life difficult for Sethe, the slave woman and her family. Nevertheless, the woman finds the haunting oddly comforting for the spirit is that of her own dead baby that was never named, thought of only as Beloved. While Morrison demystifies master historical narratives, she also wants to raise *real* or authentic African American history in its place. She deconstructs while she reconstructs, tapping the well of African American "presence", of the "disremembered and unaccounted for. "*Site of Memory,*" (Zinsser) Toni Morrison explicitly describes the project of writing *Beloved* as one of fictional reconstruction or "literary archaeology', of imagining the inner life of the slave woman Margaret Garner. While working on *The Black Book*(1974), a collection of cultural documents recording African American "history-as-life-lived," Morrison discovered a newspaper clipping about Garner, a runaway slave who had murdered her children at the moment of capture, and Sethe is modeled on her. However Morrison's narration of history is presented along with disruptive voices, one example of which is the newspaper account of Margaret Garner's deed, a document that reappears in the novel as a harsh official alternative to Sethe's emotional interpretation of events of the period; for example, the Fugitive Slave Bill, the historical fact that provokes Sethe's infanticide, is mentioned only in parentheses. Even more striking is her rendering of Civil War, the apocalypse of American national history, as a minor, inconsequential event in the lives

of these former slaves. While Morrison reminds us of the slippage between signifier and signified in the scene with the newspaper clipping, she also calls attention to the fact that the past is only available to us through textual traces, such as *Beloved* and *The BlackBook*. The ending of the *Beloved* suggests that the past is a lasting presence, waiting to be resurrected: "Down by the stream in back of 124 her footprints come and go, come and go ... should a child, an adult place his feet in them, they will fit" (Morrison, *Beloved* p275) Although the ending suggests partial healing, the spectre of the past remains, waiting to resurface.

The postmodern trend of historiographic metafiction appeared in a period that witnessed the development of a new conception of history or, at least, of historiography. The contemporary doxa, as expounded by a certain number of theorists or philosophers, on both sides of the Atlantic (among whom Hayden White, Michel de Certeau and Paul Veyne are notable) is that the original Aristotelian distinction between the historian and the poet — i .e. between historiographic and fictional discourse — is no longer valid. In other words, according to New Historicists, access to the past is only made possible through the means of texts. This implies the impossibility of getting directly in touch with past events and leads in turn to what might be called the *waning of reference*, in so far as the historical referent is caught in the subjective and warping nets of discourse. This leads to a paradox formulated by Hutcheon of historiographic metafiction viewing the past acknowledging it's only textualized accessibility to us today. Fredric Jameson similarly insists on the notion of inescapable textualization (and consequent reification) inherent in the last phase of capitalism (late capitalism), which has become a sine qua non of postmodern culture. The implication is that one can only get "signs and traces" of the past and that one is denied access to "features or elements of a form" This leads in turn to the conclusion that period concepts corresponds to no reality at all, and, one step further, that signs have jettisoned all connection to reference since, in Jean Baudrillard's terms, we have entered the area of the "precession of simulacra". While one may not agree with Jameson, who describes postmodern society as one "bereft of all historicity, whose own putative past is little more than a set of dusty spectacles . . . the past as 'referent' finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts" (Jameson*); one cannot deny the fact that the dismemberment of history, fiction and time has left the constituting of subjectivity in a rather problematised textual space. In an interview,

Jameson summed up the thesis of his book, *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* with the remark that "time has become a perpetual present and thus spatial" in postmodern culture. Retaining a Marxist desire for teleology and linearity, Jameson regrets the postmodern flattening of time, arguing that it deprives people of a "true" sense of history, of cause and effect, of "deep phenomenological experience". He is nostalgic for "the great high modernist thematic of time and temporality, the elegiac mysteries of duree and memory . . . we now inhabit the synchronic rather than the diachronic". However Toni Morrison's text *Beloved* explores spatial time as an authentic experience rather than a loss or a mere "simulacrum." Its narrative, lacking in punctuation, of ancestors and their progeny. The concept of history in *Beloved* is not flattened but rather takes on extra volume to contain the cultural memories of ancestors, to which one can have access only through imagination and a circular perception of time. It is because Morrison rejects a modernist diachronic view of history, that she can explore the idea of a more synchronic, spatial experience of time. Her spatial sense of time can be read not only as a postmodern form of temporality, but it can also be viewed as an expression of the temporal experiences of African Americans, who are often, denied a future and are therefore haunted by the past or must retreat to it. Sethe in *Beloved* is clearly frustrated and "boxed in" by time; she cannot construct an ordered timeline of her life, so she attempts her experiment of living only in the present. She fails to do so, and in spite of the partial healing, till the end of the novel, her subjectivity, remains ruptured by the past and the threat of its resurfacing again any moment. Thus the dismemberment of time, fiction and history in historiographic fiction can be read as a means of giving voice to suppressed and marginalized identities. At the same time these identities can only be enunciated through a dismemberment they attain in fiction. Thus they become disjunctive subjectivities.

Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987) is another example of historiographic metafiction. However Ackroyd, unlike Morrison, rather than try to delineate a marginalized historical entity, chooses to depict how fictional realms consume subjectivity. In Chatterton Peter Ackroyd specifically chooses a Romantic hero in order to demonstrate how the poet disappears into his own texts, which survive him. Within the novel textuality rules: Ackroyd writes "I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object" and concludes, "language speaks us" (Ackroyd *Chatterton* .p 139-140) In the novel, Ackroyd deconstructs three myths: the 'truth' of

history writing, the Romantic idea of original, individualistic genius, and the myth of 'realistic' fiction, which he exposes as a convention. Ackroyd tries to show from the very beginning of his novel that each age appropriates the past for its own purposes and in its own ways. There is no such thing as objective past, let alone a recoverable figure of Chatterton.

Linda Hutcheon shows how D.M. Thomas's novel *The White Hotel* confronts the relation of "non-coincidence between the discursive constructs of *woman* and the historical subject called *women*."(Hutcheon 166) In the novel eroticism emerges as the central trope for examining the difficult subject of Holocaust experience and memory. And the female body becomes the site for displaying this erotic impulse. It is on the body of the female character that the author projects a kind of sexual paranoia, and it is through watching these sexualized bodies that the reader/ viewer participates in navigating between sex and violence and sex and death, in a fictional Holocaust universe, which Thomas attempts to render "real." Thomas's protagonist Lisa Erdman in *The White Hotel* writes erotic poetry in which she figures as an exhibitionist nymphomaniac. She hallucinates about falling from a great height and being buried by a landslide whenever she engages in intercourse. She is a woman of mixed catholic and Jewish heritage and her hallucinations are actually glimpses of her future murder in the ravine of the BabiYar massacre. Her eventual murder in the ravine of BabiYar is described in sexualized and horrific prose. While a patient of Thomas's fictional version of Freud, and in the grip of what Freud believed to be hysteria, Lisa writes a erotic poem in which she fantasizes a sexual adventure at the White Hotel where she and Freud's son incessantly make love. The fictional Freud, who narrates a large part of this novel, draws the conclusion through Lisa's case analysis that sex and death are intertwined phenomena. Later, when Lisa actually falls into the ravine— shot, yet barely alive— Thomas repeats the sexual/erotic rhetoric while describing her death. Lisa becomes an example of the woman as a spectacle, a woman whose subjectivity is a result of her own inscriptions as well as those of others. The novel exhibits multiple and often contradictory forms and points of view; first person poem, third person expansion of it in prose, third person limited narration and first person epistolary form. The narrative's dispersion is an objective correlative of the decentering of the female subject and of history. The constituting of the female subject is viewed as a process, and in the text she becomes the site of narrative contradictions that are needed to produce and reproduce meaning, value and ideology. Thus we see in all

the three texts cited above, that though historiographic metafiction is used to establish subjectivity, it establishes a dismembered one. Such a dismembering is imperative to demystify naturalized and unified accounts of history. But at the same time from a postmodern perspective it seems the only way in which subjectivity in a postmodern era can be depicted. In fact the postmodern era has seen more women authors opting for genre that deconstruct realism. Such genres are a means of negotiating with language, newer themes and divided subjectivities.

De Lauretis asserts that what a woman must accomplish, in order to become a subject and to define her own desires, is neither more nor less than a narrative revolution in their moving away from the established premises of realism. The female subject perceived by these women authors is a divided one; inhabiting as well as re-creating dismembered histories, realities and fictions.

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Reconstruction Of Distinct Dalit Identity In Bama's *KARUKKU*

K. Christina Kamei
R. K. Ashalata Devi

> I don't know when my wings will heal and gain enough strength so that I too will be able to fly again. Just as people throw sticks and stones to wound a wingless bird, many people have wounded me with their words and deeds. Yet I know I'm moving forward slowly, step by step (Bama 122).

Karukku is a milestone in the history of Dalit literature. It is an autobiographical novel which explores the issues of marginalisation, social discrimination, exploitation and the subaltern status of the Dalits in the caste-ridden Indian society. In the novel, Bama narrates her personal struggle to find her identity raising her voice against the prevailing hegemony inherent in Indian society. For Bama, the novel was a means to heal her inward wound. She also proclaims that "my language, my culture, my life is praiseworthy, it is excellent" (Bama x). As a Dalit, she opens up her mind and unravels the distinct Dalit consciousness in its totality. Her autobiography is indeed a firsthand record of her experience as a Dalit woman through which she advocates transformation and change to rebuild the society on the principles of equality, freedom and human dignity.

Division of society on the basis of caste has been prevalent in Indian society since time immemorial. Religious scriptures have guaranteed the subjugation, segregation and marginalisation of the Dalits who belong to the lowest rung of the ladder of society. Dalits are denied basic amenities and basic human rights. They are assigned menial jobs like cleaning sewage and domestic waste, cleaning the street, removing dead animals and doing all sorts of disgraceful works. They are restricted from taking part in the social activities and religious functions. Arun Mukherjee in his "Introduction" to Valmiki's *Joothan* points out the plight of the Dalits:

> "For centuries, they have been at the bottom of India's social pyramid and denied even the most basic human rights such as access to drinking water from public lakes and wells, freedom to walk on public roads, and freedom to choose an occupation instead of being assigned one by birth. The transformation of the stigmatized identity of these erstwhile untouchables to a self-chosen identity as Dalit is a story of collective struggle waged over centuries. (Valmiki xi)"

Moreover, they do not have the right to education and due to lack of education their condition worsened. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar stressed on the educational aspect and highlighted their condition to the world. He also reiterated how the Dalits were denied ownership of land and forced to provide their labour against their will and were without any control over their wages.

To bring out the contradictions of social life and also to narrate their struggle against injustices and inequalities, Dalit writers come up with their own stories to shape their future. So, Dalit literature

develops and gains momentum as a powerful tool to overthrow and dismantle the existing concept of mainstream literature. The unmistakable stamp of anger is echoed in the following lines of Namdeo Dhasal, the Dalit poet who condemns and also challenges the mainstream Literature:

> I curse you, curse your book
>
> Curse your Culture, your hypocrisy-
>
> I wasn't going to say this,
>
> But now my hands have woken up
>
> (qtd.Devy:2013,xx).

Many Dalit writers felt that revealing the inner apathy through the pen is one of the best ways to express the agony of their inner self. They have brought out their personal accounts of life in the public domain to ignite the masses with their experiences and circumstances in the form of autobiographies. Dalit writers like Laxman Gaikwad, Narandra Jadhav, Om Prakash Valmiki, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Arjun Dangle, Daya Pawar, Baby Kamble and Bama have contributed in igniting the society against the atrocities done to their community. Autobiographies written by these writers split open the grief and hardship suffered by Dalits under the rigid traditions of the society. The autobiographies are loaded with terrible abuses experienced by these writers in their lifetime. The basic objective behind writing the autobiographies is to portray the real picture of Dalit life and identity and to showcase the discrimination suffered by them. Mainstream writers cannot do justice in representing the actual situation of the Dalits in Indian society. They sympathise with the Dalits but fail to

portray the authentic Dalit experience. To fill this lacuna, the Dalits write autobiographies to educate society about their challenges, their pain and sufferings. Limbale's observation makes it all clear:

> The Literature of the exploited is primarily concerned with search for freedom, and giving expression to it...We should remember that the imaginary or idea for freedom has an aesthetic effect, as much as it has political, economic, social and moral facets...These three values of life-equality, freedom and solidarity-can be regarded as constituting the essence of beauty in Dalit Literature. The aesthetics of Dalit Literature rests on: first, the artist's social commitment, second, the life-affirming values present in the artistic creation: and third, the ability to raise the reader's consciousness of the fundamental values like equality, freedom, justice and fraternity (Limbale 119-20).

In the realm of Dalit literature, Bama's *Karukku* can be seen as a novel phenomenon where Bama stresses the need to recover and reconstruct the lost identity of the Dalits. According to Bama, their perpetual enslavement can only be shed by bravely voicing against all social injustices. The mission of this liberation movement is nothing but a demonstration to show that the entire human race have the same right-right to equality, freedom and justice. The most tragic fact is that the denigrating concept of untouchability is inculcated in the Dalit children from a very tender age. When Bama was in the third standard, while returning from school, she saw an elderly person of her caste carrying a small packet with a string, without touching it and giving it to a Naicker. She "wanted to shriek with laughter at the sight of such a big

man carrying a small packet in that fashion" (Bama 15). From that day, she understood the real meaning of untouchability and pollution. Her brother, Annan urged her to work hard and stand first in the class so that she is treated with honour and dignity by the caste Hindus:

> 'Because we are born into the Paraya jati, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities. So study with care, learn all you can. If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their own accord and attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn'. (Bama 18)

She stayed in a hostel in the neighbouring village after the eighth class. There she felt the wound in her soul as a Dalit. She always had a desire to prove that she can study and compete with others and move ahead. After completing her graduation, she started teaching in a village school near Kancheepuram and decided to become a nun to educate the poor and needy children. Her family and outsiders insisted that she should not join the convent and warned her that "caste difference counted for a great deal within convents" (Bama 23). But she entered the order and thought that she had arrived at a place which had no connection at all with her caste.

The taste of caste oppression which she had right from school days was prevalent not only in the social circle, but also in the Catholic Church. Dalit Christians were not allowed to be part of prayer service, they were not allowed to sing in choirs and they were abandoned and were forced to sit separately in the Church. They were not even given the right to bury their dead-ones in

the graveyard of Christians. Their cemetery was located in the periphery of the city or village. The priest and the church modified the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ to gain dominance and subjugate the Dalits. She soon realised that "there was no place that was free of caste" (Bama 25). For seven years, she stayed in the convent discharging her duties and responsibilities as a teacher and as a nun. Inside the convent, she saw the exploitation of the Dalit children and teachers: the convent I entered serve the children of the wealthy. In that convent, they really do treat the people who suffer from poverty in one way, and those who have money in their pockets in a totally different way" (Bama 77). Moreover, the priest and the nuns were "hypocrites and frauds" (Bama 102).

Christianity always favoured and taught the lesson of docility, modesty, submissiveness, and subordination to the faithful. Bama observed that the Church elders enjoyed the exploitation of the humility of the devotees with sadistic enjoyment. This injustice is spelled out by Arulraja, "Those who commit atrocities against Dalits do not differentiate between Christian Dalits and non-Christian Dalits. For an Indian, a Dalit is a Dalit, whether Christian or not" (Arulraja 9). On the other hand, the oppressed were not taught about God. Instead they were taught about humility, obedience, patience and gentleness in an empty and meaningless way. In fact, there was no connection between prayer, worship and life. There was also no love for the poor and the downtrodden even though the convent people declared that God is loving, just, forgiving and kind. There was also different versions of God, one for the poor and "a wealthy Jesus" (Bama 106) for the wealthy.

Exasperated by the miserable condition of Dalits, Bama decided to leave the convent in 1992. After leaving the convent,

she stood at a crucial moment of her life where her identity was questioned as a Dalit, as a Christian and moreover as a woman. She recalls how she was treated differently from others as a Dalit woman and admonished harshly every time she tried to stand up for herself, think for herself or speak on behalf of those whom the convent actually meant to serve. Even leaving the convent proved a herculean task as she was constantly obstructed by the more senior nuns. When she left the convent, she found herself helpless, without a job or any kind of support. But she emerges as an emancipated woman who has rescued her life and brought it home safely. Her story is linked with the life of her community – the Dalits. The more they try to rise up, the more they are pushed to the margins. According to her, society has the moral responsibility to support the Dalits who have been otherwise oppressed and deprived of equal opportunities over centuries. Writing, for the Dalits, is indeed an effort to assert their identity and is a means for the liberation of Dalits.

In the novel, Bama poses these question: "Are Dalits not human beings? Do they not have common sense? Do they not have such attributes as a sense of honour and self-respect? Are they without any wisdom, beauty, dignity? What do we lack?" (Bama 27) She also brings out the present scenario of the changing perspective of the Dalits and the power the Dalits are equipped with. Education has enlightened the Dalits and as a result, they will no more accept their fixed destiny. Those who are in power, inside and outside the church, will not be able to rob and deceive them. They can reclaim their lost human dignity and resurrect the Dalit identity which remained muted and marginalised for so long:

> 'How long will they deceive us, as if we are innocent children, with their Pusai and their holy communion,

> their rosary and their novena? Children growing up, will no longer listen to everything they are told, open-mouthed, nodding their heads. Dalits have begun to realize the truth. They have realized that they have been maintained as the stone steps that others have trodden on as they raised themselves up. They have become aware that they have been made slaves in the name of God, the Pusai, and the Church. They have experienced a state of affairs where, in the name of serving the poor, these others have risen in power while actually treading on the poor. Dalits have learnt thet these others have never respected them as human beings, but bent the religion to their benefit, to maintain their falsehood.
>
> ...they have become aware that they too were created in the likeness of God. There is a new strength within them, urging them to reclaim their likeness which has been so far repressed, ruined, obliterated; and to begin to live again with honour, self-respect, and with a love towards all humankind. (Bama 108-109)

The three-fold marginalisation of the Dalit women in the hands of caste-Hindu men, caste-Hindu women and the Dalit men is also depicted by Bama. The image of Dalit women as dedicated, diligent, valiant and fearless women who work perpetually managing both the household and outside affairs single-handedly brings out the pathetic condition of the Dalit women who are at the mercy of the Dalit men at the domestic level. Regardless of handling two roles at home and in the fields, Dalit women are brutally treated in the family and are prey to domestic violence. Through *Karukku*, Bama explains the trauma of Dalit women in the patriarchal Indian society. In the words of Gayatri Spivak: "The

Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as pious item. (Spivak 4).

Bama also severely criticises the excessive servitude of the Dalits through her grandmother, Paatti who says: "Without them, how will we survive? Can we change this? (Bama 17). Bama's mother also is not ready to fight injustices and inequalities. Instead, she prefers to remain silent and advises her daughter: "Say you are from a different caste. They'll never know" (Bama 20). The older generation of Dalits accept their fate and never dreamt of changing their status and condition in the society because of lack of education. Her grandmother works in the household of the upper-caste people and depends on the left-over rice and curry from the Naicker house which is seen by the Dalits as the "nectar of the gods" (Bama 16). Bama feels very upset about the instinctive way of accepting the subaltern status by the Dalit community. She kept her spark alive and fought against the discrimination and humiliation as a firebrand. She writes, "I swallowed the very words that came into my mouth; never said anything out aloud but battled within myself". She continues, "I lamented inwardly that there was no place free of caste" (Bama 25). She boldly confesses that "being a coward, I survived somehow" (Bama 26). Ten years later after the publication of *Karukku*, Bama asserts: "I described myself in *Karukku* as a bird whose wings had been clipped; I now feel like a falcon that treads the air, high in the skies" (Bama xi).She proclaims loud and clear '*Dalit endru sollada; talai nimirndu nillada*' ('Say you are a Dalit; lift up your head and stand tall') (Bama 138).

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Hindi Translation Of Select Passages From Tagore's Gora

Pratima Das

Gora is a major text in relation to Tagore's concept of Nationalism. There have been many translations of *Gora* into English including one by mainly Tagore himself. But such a core text has not seen many Hindi translations — Hindi being the declared National language though there is much opposition to this as 'linguistic tyranny'. In my paper I shall offer brief selections from *Gora* relating to the discussion about Nationalism.

Nationalism is simply about how a nation exists with all its diverse population, communities and groups and how it functions as a modern democratic Nation. Our country is a pluralistic society and must be focused on women's rights and the rights of the Dalits and the so called lower castes. This is an extract from this novel *Gora* which suggestively comments on these. My presentation of these areas significant passages will be through my own Hindi translation.

The Original English version of *Gora*: This is an interaction between Anandamoyi and her son Gora.

Gora shook his head vehemently as he said: "No, no, mother, none of that, please! I cannot allow Binoy to eat in your room."

"Don't be absurd, Gora," said Anandamoyi. "I never ask you to do so. And as for your father, he has become so orthodox that he will eat nothing not cooked by his own hands. But Binu is my good boy; he's not a bigot like you, and you surely do not want to prevent him by force from doing what he thinks right?"

"Yes, I do!" answered Gora. "I must insist on it. It is impossible to take food in your room so long as you keep on that Christian maidservant Lachmi."

"Oh, Gora dear, how can you bring yourself to utter such words!"

exclaimed Anandamoyi, greetly distressed. “Have you not all along eaten food from her hand, for it was she who nursed you and brought you up? Only till quite lately, you could not relish your food without the chutney prepared by her. Besides, can I ever forget how she saved your life, when you had small pox, by her devoted nursing?”

“Then pension her off,” said Gora impatiently. “Buy her some land and build a cottage for her; but you must not keep her in the house, mother!”

“Gora, do you think that every debt can be paid off with money?” said Anandamoyi. “She wants neither land nor cash; she only wants to see you, or she will die.”

“Then keep her if you like,” said Gora resignedly. “But Binoy must not eat in your room. Scriptural rules must be accepted as final. Mother I wonder that you, the daughter of such a great Pandit, should have no care for our orthodox customs. This is too—”

“Oh, Gora, you silly boy!” smiled Anandamoyi. There was a time when this mother of yours was very careful about observing all these customs; and at the cost of many a tear too!— Where were you then? Daily I used to worship the emblem of Shiva, made by my own hands, and your father used to come and throw it away in a fury. In those days I even felt uncomfortable if I ate rice cooked by any and every Brahmin. We had but little of railways then, and through many a long day I have had to fast when travelling by bullock-cart, or on a camel, or in a palanquin. Your father won the approbation of his English masters because of his unorthodox habit of taking his wife wherever he travelled; for that he gained promotion, and was allowed to stay at headquarters instead of being kept constantly on the move. But for all that, do you think he found it an easy matter to break my orthodox habits? Now that he has retired in his old age with a heap of savings, he has suddenly turned orthodox and intolerant,— but I cannot follow him in his somersaults. The traditions of seven generations of my ancestors were uprooted, one by one,—do you think they can now be replanted at a word?”

“Well, well,” answered Gora, “leave aside your ancestors— they are not making objections. But surely out of regard for us you must agree to certain things. Even if you do not regard the scriptures, you ought to respect the claims of love.”

“Need you explain these claims with so much insistence?” asked

Anandamoyi wearily. "Do I not know only too well what they mean? What happiness can it be for me, at every step I take, to come into collision with husband and child? But do you know that it was when I first took you in my arms that I said good-bye to convention? When you hold a little child to your breast then you feel certain that no one is born into this world with caste. From that very day the understanding came to me that if I looked down upon anyone for being of low caste, or a Christian, then God would snatch you away from me. Only stay in my arms as the light of my home, I prayed, and I will accept water from the hands of anyone in the world!"

Now, my own Hindi translation of the select passages from Gora in Roman Script:

Gora jor se sir hilakar bola, "Nahin, Ma, yeh nahin hoga. Tumhare kamre mein main Binoy ko khane nahin dunga."

Anandmayi, betuki baatein mat karo Gora! Maine tujhe toh kabhi aisa karne ko nahin kaha—Aur idhar tere pita toh bhayankar sudhachari ho uthe hain, khud khana jab tak na banaye khate nahin. Lekin Binu, mera pyara beta hain, teri tarah sankirn mann ka nahin, tu zaroor use zor karke rokna nahin chahta, uss kaam se jo woh sahi manta hain?

Gora, haan! Yahin karna parega. Tumhare kamre mein main kha nahin sakta, jabtak tum iss Ishai dasi Lachmi ko rakhogi.

Anandmayi! Are Gora; aesi baat apni juban par mat la. Hamesha hi uske haton se tune khana khaya hain, usne tujhko bachpan se bara kiya hain. Yeh kuch pehle bhi uske haton ki chutni khaye begair tujhe khana acha nahin lagta tha. Bachpan mein jab tujhe 'chechak' hua tha tab lachmi ne hi tujhe seva karke bachaya, yeh main kabhi nahin bhul sakti.

Gora, Tab use pension do, zamin kharid ke do, makan bana do, jo khushi ho woh karo, lekin use rakh nahin sakti tum, Ma!

Anandmayi, Gora tujhe lagta hain, paise se hi sab rhin ki mukti ho jati hain! Use zamin nahin chahiye, makan bhi nahin chahiye, tujhe dekhe bina woh mar jayegi.

Gora, tab use rakho agar tumhari khushi hain. Lekin Benoy tumhare kamre mein kha nahin sakta. Jo shashtriya niyam hain use manna hi parega; kisi bhi tarah iska amanya nahin ho sakta. Ma, main yeh soch bhi nahin saktaki tum itne bare Pandit ke vansh ki beti ho,lekin tumhare liye hamare sanskaro ki koi maryada nahin hain.

Anandmayi, O! Gora mera buddhu ladka! Ek samay tha jab tumhari yeh Ma sab sanskaro ko manti thi; use lekar kafi aanshu bahane pare— tab tum kahan thein? Har roz Shiv banakar puja karne baithti thi aur tumhare pita aakar gusse mein bar-bar phenk dete thein. Un dino mein mujhe kisi bhi Brahman ke haton se bane chawal khane mein asuvidha hoti thi. Us samay par railgari jyada vistrit nahin thi—bailgari mein,dakgari mein, palki mein, uuth ke upar chadkar na jane kitne hi din upwas karke bitaye thein. Tumhare pita ko sahib-munim wah –wahi dete thein, kyunki veh apni patni ko apne sath har jagah le jate thein, unki asanskari aur adhunik dharnao ke wajah se; isliye unhe padunnati bhi mili, aur unhe kendriya affice par bhi rehne ki anumati mili, hamesha badli hokar charo taraf ghumna bhi nahin para.Lekin in sab ki wjah se, kya tumhe lagta hain ki unke liye yeh asaan tha mere sanskari aadato ko torna? Ab jab weh vridh-avastha mein kaam se avsar prapt kar, dher sara jama-punji lekar achanak hi sanskari aur asahishnu ban gaye,—lekin main unke kalabazi ka anusaran nahin kar sakti. Mere saat purusho ke purvajo ke sanskaro ko ek-ek karke nirmul kiya gaya hain,—kya tumhe lagta hain ki unhe ab boya ja sakta hain sirf kehne matra se?

Gora, Thik hain! thik hain! tumhare purvpurusho ki baat chor do—ve to koi aapatti nahin kar rahen. Lekin hamare khatir tumhe kuch-chize manke chalna hi parega. Mana shastro ka samman nahin bhi karo, sneh ka toh samman rakhna hi parega.

Anandmayi [klant kanth se], Zaroorat kya hain tumhe in sab davo ko bar –bar zor karke mujhe samjhane ki? Kya main yeh ache se nahin janti ki in sab ka kya arth hain. Mere liye kya khushi ki baat hain ki har kadam jo main uthati huun, pati aur bache ke sangharsh ka karan banoo? Lekin kya tum jante ho ki jab maine pehli bar tumhe apne bahon mein uthaya, tab maine sanskaro ko bidayi de diya. Jab tum ek chote se bache ko stano par loge tab tum yeh nischay hi jaan jaoge ki iss prithvi par jati,varn,gotra lekar koi janm nahin leta.Usi din se maine yeh uplabhdhi ki, agar maine kisi ko bhi nicha samjha, uske choti jati ya Ishai hone par, tab Bhagwan tujhe mujhse chhin lenge. Tu meri goud bhar-kar mere ghar mein roshni banke rah,maine yeh prarthana kit hi, tab main prithvi ke kisi bhi vyekti ke hathon se pani piyungi!

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My Grandfather BVR: Urban Historian *per excellence*

Amitava Roy

My earliest memories of my grandfather go back to the late 40s and early 50s of the twentieth century when I had started growing up on my grandmother's lap. My fond kaleidoscope of memories include one of my birthdays (I was born in 1947) where BVR has me sitting on his lap, dipping his finger in the rice-pudding or 'payesh' in a silver bowl- an heirloom of the Roy family-and letting me suck his finger as a kind of lollypop treat for a special day.

BVR stood just over six feet in his socks and etched in my memory is his ramrod straight figure in a double breasted brown suit going out on his official work in the morning and promising to bring something special for me when he returned home. He retired as Asst. Collector, Revenue, Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) in 1940 and had only that one suit in his meager wardrobe Later, as was the normal family tradition those days, my father and uncle were to use part of that suit and I tooput on some of his worn-out remnants. In office and while at official work he was always attired like a 'pucca sahib' (minus the 'sola' hat!) but for all other occasions he dressed in the native Indian fashion. He had two dhotis, one Punjabi and one long-sleeved white shirt which when required he would himself wash every morning at exactly 7 a.m., Indian Standard Time.

On Saturdays when CMC closed early he would go on a walk around the Dalhousie area (now BBD Bag) to pick up very cheap second-hand copies of *Field and Stream, National Geographic* and similar foreign magazines containing wonderful pictures of wild animals, birds and beasts and of Nature in all her awesome moods. This he did for my future entertainment and education, to teach a little boy how to work with scissors and gum to make a scrapbook.

A habit and hobby instilled into me by BVR which I continued with my daughter Rukmini (b.1978) and currently with my granddaughter Miura b.2016) BVR wanted his only grandson to know very early in life about the mind-boggling beauty and variety of the world's flora and fauna and in the process develop a reverential feeling for all races, tribes, communities and the animal kingdom across the globe. To this end he would take his family of two sons Ajit and Kanai, Ajit's wife Ila i.e. my mother, my grandmother Shanti Devi and of course me to the famed Calcutta Zoo on special Sunday outings during winter. The preparation would begin the night before with my mother and

grandma making heaps of sandwiches of two types–cucumber and minced meat or 'keema' as called locally. These would be packed in napkins, wrapped in damp newspapers and stored overnight (we possessed no refrigerator then) to be divided equally during our picnic at the Zoo. There BVR would specially educate me on the categories of the animals inside their cages and enclosures: zebra, elephant, rhino, tiger, lion, lynx, orang-o-tan, birds, serpents, gators, pangolin and the multifarious human beings outside the cages milling around us. There would be Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Jews, wearing the special headgear and caps of their religious and State-wise traditions. An educational picnic at the Zoo has become a family tradition continued by my father with his granddaughter Rukmini. A tradition, I am waiting to continue with my granddaughter Miura, when she grows a little older.

I recall that throughout my growing-up years many distinguished and different kinds of people would drop into see BVR and pick his brains for information about the growth of Calcutta from the time of Job Charnock till the present day. There was the venerable Amal Home, friend and associate of Rabindranath Tagore and Deshbandhu C.R.Das, who was instrumental in inducting BVR into the Editorial Board of the CMC Gazette which under the stewardship of Home and BVR became a leading periodical on the City and allied subjects. There was Mr. Emerson, the renowned Englishman and Editor of the *Statesman* newspaper who would also drop in to discuss possible subjects for the articles by BVR which the *Statesman* would regularly publish together with pencil sketches and charcoal drawings by BVR at which my grandfather was particularly deft.

BVR had a large group of friends and associates who admired his work and personality. These included Film makers and business tycoons, stars of the Bengalee and Indian stage, historians and journalists, raconteurs and other charismatic personage: like Cyrus Madan of Madan Theatres, Niranjan Pal of Bombay Talkies fame, famous singer Kundan Lal Saigal, stars of the stage like the brothers Sisir and Biswanath Bhaduri, renowned historian and one time associate of Lenin, Dr. Asit Mukherjee etal.

BVR's Family Tree And Maharaja Nanda Kumar

Throughout his long life BVR was very meticulous and methodical about information and data collection some of which he stored in his computer-like brain and some which he put down on paper and exercise books which I have carefully preserved. One of which is a hand written Family Tree which traces our descent from the 10th century AD Sena dynasty onwards i.e. from the time of Raja Bir Sen, better known as Adi Sur, who brought over five elite Brahmins from Kanauj to create a pure stock of Hindu Brahmins in Bengal. My ancestor Krishna Chandra Roy's *History of India* provides the

details for this and names Bhattanaryan Upadhyay (Sandilya Gotra) as the progenitor of our Brahmin race. The more immediate ancestor was Radha Charan Bandopadhyay who married the Maharaja Nanda Kumar's second daughter Kinumoni and received the honorific title *Ray Rayan* from the Nawab of Murshidabad. Maharaja Nanda Kumar is considered the first martyr of India's Freedom struggle done to death with forged documents and perjured witnesses by his two implacable enemies Governor General Warren Hastings and Sir Eliza Impey, the Chief Justice of India working hand in glove together. The verdict, death by hanging has been condemned by eminent historians of the Raj as 'judicial murder'.

BVR'S father K.C.Ray (1838-1912) was the fourth generation of royalty descending from the Majaraja Nanda Kumar with BVR being the fifth in line, followed by my father Ajit Kumar (1921-1999), myself being seventh in the royal line followed by my daughter Rukmini (eighth generation) and grandchild Miura(ninth generation).

BVR had seven brothers and three sisters who with their parents had relocated to Calcutta at the turn of the century in 1901 from Bhatpara or Bhattopally, the seat of the elite Brahmins in Bengal. With their father K.C.Ray and mother Biraj Mohini Devi the siblings shifted to their new joint-family home at Amherst Street near the Harrison Road- College Street intersection in North Central Calcutta.

Though BVR's family was of elite Brahmin stock and derived their ancestry from the royal line in Bengal, BVR was neither elitist in religion nor overly proud about his royal lineage. He grew up in Calcutta as a secular modern young man cramped into a one and half room space (actually one room and a covered verandah in their Amherst Street family home) with his wife, two sons and a daughter soon to die of early marriage and anemia, perennially short of lebensraum and finances.

Like his father K.C.Ray, the joint headmaster of the then undivided Hindu and Hare school in College Street, BVR too took up a teaching position in Hindu School after completing his studies. He got a third division MA in English from Calcutta University. In BVR's time Calcutta University had a third class or division category for MA students and my grandfather was proud to belong to a world-wide group of famous people who had obtained a third class MA from English Universities(like the illustrious W.H. Auden for instance). Impecunious circumstances soon forced BVR to leave school teaching where he earned under Rupees fifty a month and joined the Corporation of Calcutta in 1909, an institution whose list of Mayors included Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Deshbandhu C.R.Das among other notables.

BVR joined as a Sub-Inspector in the Revenue Dept. and rose to retire as

Asst. Collector, Revenue at the CMC, which did not want to let him go and offered many extensions. BVR finally retired with a princely Provident Fund of Rs. 24000! with which he promptly booked land for a house.

From about the 1930s Calcutta was starting on a Southward extension and expansion. Marshland, paddy fields and wastelandwere being reclaimed for house building and township projects. BVR decided to be adventurous and modern, amicably left the joint-family home in Amherst Street and with the aforementioned princely PF of Rupees Twenty four thousand bought land in plot 1/4, one among many then being parceled out by the newly instituted Calcutta Improvement Trust(CIT). He built a two-storied standalone house there for his two sons and their future families. When BVR built his house there was only one other residential building on that plot during the early1940s.

The area has now become a bustling upmarket middle and upper class residential cum commercial hub with not an inch of available real estate. In time BVR's seven brothers all followed his lead and built their own houses in the contiguous Ballygunge, Rashbehari and Southern Avenue-Lake Road areas.

The CMC, which BVR had served faithfully as Tax Collector and later as a renowned Editor of the CMC Gazette, honoured him by naming the Street on which his house stands today (then plot 1/4, currently 6A) Maharaja Nanda Kumar Road, celebrating and acknowledging BVR's royal connection. Incidentally there now exists another Maharaja Nanda Kumar Road in the Northern suburbs of Calcutta honouring the presence of another segment of the royal family of Nandakumar.

BVR's book on old Calcutta & Bibliographical Matters

In 1946 BVR'S outstanding book on the City, *Old Calcutta Cameos* was published with a long Foreword by Amal Home, legendary Editor of the 'Calcutta Municipal Gazette'. Home had requested his close friend, actually politely commanded BVR, to share his great knowledge of Old Calcutta with readers for whom BVR was a household name due to his regular articles in the English and Bangla Media. Printed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee of Depali Press in Upper Circular Road, it was supervised at every stage by Santosh Kumar Chatterjee. BVR handsomely and gratefully acknowledges in his Introduction the great assistance received from his life-long admirer S.K.Chatterjee, who was later to become the Editor of the Calcutta Municipal Gazette. The First Impression appeared in April, 1946, had over 150 pages and was priced at 'Rs Four only'. Home himself wrote the blurb on the inside flaps of the book's jacket: "through his Cameos pulsates the life of the inhabitants of the Great city in days gone by. Here is Calcutta at work and play… here are its topography and its locations, its bricks and mortar made real as flesh and blood…(the author) takes us through

almost every phase of Calcutta life at a time when the Englishman dressed himself up in long coats, when English women smoked the *hookah*, when slaves were sold openly…when huge blocks of ice from the Wenham lakes in America were transported to Calcutta in ships." Home concludes his forward with words of admiration for BVR'S expertise:

"Mr.Ray has wavedhis magic wand over all these, and I am here only to draw the curtain aside and let his readers gaze at the show provided by him."

In his author's Introduction BVR writes: "I entered the service of the Corporation of Calcutta in 1909…the Corporation was remodeled under the new Act of 1923, and at the instance of its first Mayor, Deshbandhu C.R.Das a weekly journal dealing with matters of civic interest was started under the name of *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* in November 1924, under the able editorship of Mr. Amal Home. I made his acquaintance in 1927 and was encouraged by him to write a series of short articles on Old Calcutta for his journal, each dealing with a particular aspect, such as prices of commodities, modes of travel, law and justice etc. This was the beginning of a friendship and mutual esteem which has survived till today…since 1927 I have been contributing articles on Old Calcutta to the Gazette…"

The story of Calcutta is of absorbing interest both for the specialist urban historian as well as for the lay reader. It begun in 1692 as three clusters of tiny villages and mud huts standing amidst marshy land, paddy fields and jungles. BVR has shownthrough all these essays and cameos the gradual rise of the small village Kalikata, which was more obscure and less important than the other two villages, Sutanuti (Chutanuti) and Gobindapur which later became the Great City of Calcutta. In the course of two and half centuries the old town has developed into a mighty metropolis, giving asylum to more than four million people.

Books and journals on Calcutta can fill the shelves of a large library building and BVR gives a comprehensive Bibliography of his predecessors. Two books on Calcutta I found to be essential reading: H.E.Busteed's *Echoes from Old Calcutta* (Calcutta Thacker Spink1908) and Geoffry Moorhouse's Calculta (Harmondsworth England, Penguin 1972). These two are vast quarries of information and knowledge about Calcutta. What would have really pleased BVR was that Moorhouse includes BVR's book in his Bibliography. Geoffrey told me how "fascinating and entertaining" he found BVR's book to read.

In his introduction BVR wrote: "I have drawn freely from the materials written on the city of Calcutta by notable writers and historians of the previous times to gather together in one volume a series of cameos, clear-cut pictures of the one or other particular aspect of Old Calcutta, and tried to string them together into one complete whole".

BVR is no more, but his work lives on. He died of bronchial pneumonia

after a short illness borne with patience and dignity. I was working then as a young lecturer at Rabindra Bharati University, the campus being the Jorasanko Family home of the Tagores. Of late BVR's eyesight was failing and it was my daily lovingresponsibility to read out the main headlines in the *Statesman* newspaper to my grandfather before I left for the University. The routine was the same on that day in January 1972. I told him that I will be a little late in returning as I will, following BVR's advice, see the film "King Elephant" after my classes. BVR had expressly told me to see the film and report back to him whether any new facts about the African Jungles had emerged twenty years after BVR and his little grandchild had put it all down in the scrap books they made together.

I could not alas, make the final report to him on that cold January day. For when I returned, he was already gone, a faint trace of a smile on his lifeless lips seeming to assure me of his blessings and protection for the family he loved so much.

The man I loved and respected most among all my family members was gone to 'that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns'.BVR is no more, but his work lives on. And for that we are all deeply thankful to Sri Nepal Chandra Ghosh, proprietor *Sahityaloke Publishers* (57A, Karbala Tank Lane, Kol-700006). Out of sheer love of learning and knowledge he has taken on the onerous responsibility of reprinting BVR's out-of-print *Old Calcutta Cameos.* In 2019 Sri Ghosh came to see me at our family residence which had since BVR's demise added two more storeys to accommodate seminars, intimate theatre performances, expanding family and books, guests Indian and foreign who frequently come to this famous house at Nandakumar Road. BVR's book is now the rarest of rare tomes and cannot be tracked down in libraries. The National Library, Calcutta (previously The Imperial Library during the Raj) has one moth-eaten damaged copy which no one is allowed to touch. A Delhi publisher I am told has brought out an unauthorized pirated edition which he occasionally sells to collectors for an absurd sum like four hundred pounds. My daughter Rukmini has salvaged a damaged copy from our attick which is falling apart and has provided a great feast for silver fishes. This is perhaps the only copy in existence which is the authentic BVR book.

Sri Ghosh has most generously decided to bring out the page by page facsimile reprint at his own expense. He has requested me to write a biographical memoir of my grandfather to be appended to the re-print as a Foreword or Introduction. We are all eagerly looking forward to and waiting for Sahityaloke's great adventure with BVR.

Humorous Dialogues in Television Shows: An Effective Tool in English Language Learning

Kshetrimayum Vijayalakshmi Devi
Rajkumari Ashalata Devi

Introduction:

Learning a second language like English cannot be confined inside the traditional classrooms only. Language learning needs to take place outside the classroom too. Restricting the learners only within the prescribed curriculum is not sufficient as it fails to cater to the needs of learning new terminologies. Classroom-centric language learning is usually focused on grammatical accuracy and it gives little scope for practicing the language in real life situations. Two major drawbacks of classroom-centric language learning are limitation of time and lack of authenticity. Classroom settings have limitation of time whereas language learning cannot be bound by time. It should be a continuous process. Authenticity is another factor that affects the language learning process. A meaningful exposure to the target language is very crucial for a language learner. And this meaningful exposure can hardly be found in the classroom setting. It is because of these factors that most of the learners have a good writing skill while lacking in the spoken domain. The need for self-learning outside the classroom settings becomes an important element in this regard.

Hyland (2004) states that language learning can take place at any place and at any time. It can be in the classroom, library, at home or at any place. According to Knight (2007), language use which takes place outside the classroom plays an important role in the language learning process. Nunan and Richards (2015) are also of the view that the activities which happen outside the classroom can erase the weaknesses of the classroom learning process. Thus, the activities of the learners outside the classroom are very helpful in developing their fluency in the target language. Today, there are various resources which the language learner can utilise outside the classroom. Many learners engage in watching films, television shows, listening to music and such like in their free time. These activities can boost their language learning abilities. The lyrics of the song and dialogues used in those films can help them in learning the language. Television is also a valuable resource for language learning. TV shows can also be found in the internet. The learners can search for these shows in the internet if they miss the telecast and can watch any time at their leisure.

Television Programmes and the Four Language Skills:

Television programmes are available widely in English as a Second Language (ESL) and also in the form of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Television programmes can be a fun way to boost vocabulary capability and build familiarity with authentic dialogue and different cultures. It provides natural and authentic L2 aural input which helps in learning the spoken form of words and acts as a useful complement to learning through reading. The learner can use the language meaningfully and naturally.

All second language learners need to develop in all the “four

essential skills" of language learning. Languages are taught and assessed in terms of these "four skills": Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

a) Television Programmes and Listening Skills :

- *Different Accents*:

  There are various television programmes in different genres. Certain television channels show programmes of a particular country while others show a mixture of programmes from different countries. Television channels like AXN and Star World show programmes from Britain, America and Australia. And these programmes give exposure to different accents. For example, in *Britain's Got Talent*, one can hear the British accent, in *Master Chef Australia*, the contestants speak in Australian English and American programmes like *Two Broke Girls* gives an insight into American English. When the learners watch and listen to these television programmes, they are exposed to the various types of accents. The learners may or may not be able to speak in these accents but they will be able to distinguish the differences in these accents after watching the shows.

- *Connecting Visual Content and Listening*:

  Television programmes provide audio-visual facilities to the learner. In situations where the learner is unable to fully understand the audio, the moving visual helps in connecting the meaning.

- *Passive Vocabulary Stage*:

  Listening to the audio of the television programmes helps in retaining some of the vocabularies being used in it. The learners may not actively use the vocabularies but he/she will be able to recognise and connect the audio and meanings of the vocabularies.

b) Television Programmes and Reading Skills:

In the present day, most of the television programmes that telecast entertainment have subtitles. What is being said in the programme is presented in the form of subtitles at the bottom of the screen. Subtitle is not limited to providing textual contexts, it also helps in learning the vocabularies. When the leaner is exposed to a new vocabulary while watching the programmes, he/she will find it easier to learn if there is a textual representation of it.

- Speed of Reading:

  The learner, when exposed to audio-visual materials along with the textual representation for a long time, will have the ability to read at a faster pace as compared to the beginning stage. This in return will help their reading skills (outside the television programme context). The learners will also be able to read and understand a given text in a short period of time.

c) Television Programmes and Speaking Skill:

- Active Vocabulary Stage:

  After watching the television programmes, the learner is already exposed to the listening skills. One is aware of

the tone and intonation being used by the speakers of the target language. Now the learner must engage in conversation to improve the speaking skills. The learner should not worry about errors while speaking. One must not stop engaging in conversation when the errors are spotted. Instead, one must look at the error as a sign of learning the target language in an active way. The learner should play trial and error game with new idioms and colloquialisms that he/she has learnt from TV programmes. One should try using the new phrases in situations similar to those in which he/she saw them used.

d) Television Programmes and Writing Skills:

When the learner is exposed to TV, the notion that he/she will find himself/herself lacking in writing skill always lingers. However, this is not true. On the contrary, the learner can explore the area of writing in dialogue format. One can also learn about the difference between academic writing and communication-based writing. The learners are already exposed to the academic writing in their formal education system. They are taught the formats of letter-writing, notice writing etc in schools. But the dialogues which are incorporated in the texts do not reflect real-life language or situations, even though they usually contain multiple examples of the grammar being taught. The language used on TV is usually non-academic in nature (different from text-book language). And this non-academic language can be utilized in writing in dialogue form. Usually dialogue form tries to project the real life situations and the language used is also authentic in nature.

Element of Humour in Television Shows:

Defining humour is a difficult task. Humour can be defined as a quality that has the ability to generate laughter through a pleasing situation. However, when someone fails to deliver humorous lines in a correct way, it brings misunderstanding instead of laughter. Humour in TV shows is dependent on how the dialogue is being said, gestures, the narrative of the show and the relationship between the characters. Without understanding these elements, an audience will fail to recognise the humour in the show**.** There are many shows that are light-hearted and comic which entertain as well as enlighten the audience. These shows deal with various themes- familial, scientific, historical and many more. But their main core feature is comedy and sitcoms comes under this genre. Sitcoms are very popular throughout the world and they can be used to enrich vocabulary and build familiarity with authentic dialogue in a way which is filled with fun and laughter. The term 'Sitcom' refers to Situational Comedy. It is a type of TV comedy that features the same regular cast of characters reacting to a range of funny and embarrassing or unusual situations. The primary aim of sitcom is to generate laughter in the audience. It is usually set in the same place each week and the duration is half-hour. Every episode is a complete unit.

Analysis of Humorous Dialogues from Sitcoms: For the purpose of the analysis of humorous dialogues in TV shows and how sitcoms enhance as well as enrich the competence of the learners in learning English, two sitcoms (one British and one American) are given as examples:

1) Mind Your Language (British Sitcom)

The show is about teaching English to a group of foreign

students in a classroom setting. These foreign students are adults and come from different countries such as India, Pakistan, China, Japan, France, Spain, Italy and so on. Miss Courtney is the Principal and Mr. Jeremy Brown is the English Language teacher. The following scene occurs when Miss Courtney comes to check the progress of the class. The following excerpt is from Season 1, Episode 4 of the show:

***Mr.Brown*:** (shows an orange) Su Lee. What is this?

***Su Lee*:** It is *olange.*

***Mr.Brown*:** Rrrr, Rrrr. Orange.

Su Lee: *Olrange*.

***Mr.Brown*:** That's better.

***Miss Courtney*:** You must really work on those R sounds.

***Su Lee*:** I *tly velly* hard.

***Miss Courtney*:** Try saying "Around the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran".

***Su Lee* :** *'Alound luged locks, lagged lascal lan'*

***Mr.Brown*:** You're gonna have to keep practising.

The main focus of the above dialogue is Su Lee's pronunciation which lends humour to the scene. Su Lee is a Chinese character in the show. She is able to identify the correct term, that is, orange. However, it is evident that she struggles with the 'r' sound. She uses the 'l' sound instead of the original 'r' sound, i.e. *olange* and *olrange* for **orange**; *tly velly* for **try very** and *Alound luged*

locks, lagged lascal lan for **Around the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran**. However, her mispronunciation of the 'r' sound as 'l' enables the learners to learn not only the meaning of the signifier and the signified but also the correct pronunciation of the word. The humour we derive from Su Lee's pronunciation gives ample scope for learners to learn English in a quick, easy entertaining and natural process.

This problem is also found among other English language learners. For example, a Meiteilon (mother tongue of the Meitei community in Manipuri) speaker tends to change the 'l' sound to 'n' when it occurs in the final position, i.e. 'sandal' becomes *'sandan'*. This is because in Meiteilon, there is hardly any word or very few words that ends with 'l' sound. In order to use the correct sounds, the learners first need to identify the sound that they are unable to pronounce and need to practice speaking out words with those sounds.

***2) F.R.I.E.N.D.S* (American Sitcom)**

The following excerpt is from the US hit TV series **'F.R.I.E.N.D.S'**. The dialogue is from Season-1, Episode 1, where the character of Rachel is presented as someone who comes from a rich family and has no clue about the real world. The exchange of dialogue occurs at Central Park, their regular meeting place:

***Rachel* :** Guess what?

***Ross* :** You got a job?

***Rachel*:** Are you kidding ? I'm trained for nothing. I was laughed out of 12 interviews today.

***Chandler*:** Yet you're surprisingly upbeat.

***Rachel*:** Well, you would be too if you found Joan and David boots on sale...50% off.

***Chandler*:** Oh! How well you know me.

***Rachel*:** They're my new "I don't need a job or my parents. I've got great boots" boots.

***Monica*:** How'd you pay for them?

***Rachel*:** Uh, credit cards.

***Monica*:** And who pays for that?

***Rachel*:** Um, my father.

The above dialogue contains sarcastic comments. The two dialogues said by the character Chandler, i.e. 'Yet you're surprisingly upbeat' and 'Oh! How well you know me' are sarcastic in nature. These two dialogues act as sarcastic comments to what Rachel has said. Instead of saying he has no interest in those boots or its 50% discount, he uses a comment which contradicts what he actually feels. In language learning, it is not just the grammar or fluency that makes a good language learner. Knowledge of sarcasm and its usage also plays a very important role as sarcasm usually comes in the form of humour. It is these external components of language that makes communication interesting.

Both dialogues 1) and 2) are from television shows that come under the genre of comedy. These two sitcoms have regular cast members. Though the two shows have different themes, they have similar styles. There is a laughing track played whenever a funny dialogue is said in the show and this adds as a supporting element

to the humorous dialogue. At the initial stage, the learner might not be able to identify the humorous dialogues easily. However with the help of this laughing track, they will find it easier to connect with the humour part. And when they become familiar with the characters, their setting and tag-line, the learner starts to enjoy the show. This is where learning takes place unconsciously. They are enjoying the show, at the same time, they are processing the language and learning the language. The gestures used by the characters and the background-music help them in understanding the dialogues. Through humorous dialogues, language learning becomes easy and natural.

There are also instances where learners have actually learnt English from watching the sitcoms. The following is an example of the role and significance of sitcoms in facilitating the competence of the learners:

Popular Korean boy group BTS was interviewed in the famous US Television show ***The Ellen DeGeneres Show*** and the host asked RM, the only member who can speak English how he learnt English. This is from Season 15, Episode 2315 and the air date is 27th November 2017. It was also uploaded on the same date on 'TheEllenshow' Youtube channel. Here is the excerpt from the interview:

Ellen (Host) **:** So we have an interpreter just in case I need one. But you (to RM) RM speak English. So pretty well. You taught yourself English?

RM (BTS member) **:** Yes, I taught myself English.

Ellen **:** How...How did you teach yourself English?

RM **:** Umm...Actually my English teacher was the sitcom **'Friends'.**

Ellen **:** Oh! You watched '**Friends'**. **(RM:** Yes.) So, was it mainly phrases then or you just learned everything?

RM : Umm...I think, you know, back in the days, when I was like 15 or 14. It was quite like a syndrome for all the Korean parents to make their kids watch the **'Friends'**.

(**Ellen:** Really?) So, yeah, for I thought I was kinda like a victim at that time but (laughs)... but right now I am the lucky one. So, thanks to my mother, she...she bought all the DVDs for all the seasons.. Its got 10 DVDs right? (**Ellen:** yeah) She bought me. And so firstly, I watched with the Korean subtitle and then next time I watched with the English Subtitle and then I just removed it.

Ellen**:** That's very impressive and '**Friends'** will be very happy that you learned well.

RM**:** Thank you. I love **'Friends'.**

RM is a Korean native and English is a foreign language to him. This particular case shows that English can be learnt as a Foreign language with the help of subtitles in the learner's L1. After the learner reaches a certain desired level, he/she can switch off the subtitle and watch the show.

Such a case is not restricted to a particular television show. There are many shows where language learning takes place naturally watching and enjoying the show. Most of the shows deal with the common ordinary themes with which the audience can

connect. Shows with comic elements tend to make the learner learn the target language in a fun and relaxed way as compared to watching a show with dark and serious elements.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can conclude that humorous dialogue is an effective tool in English language learning as it enhances the learning process. Through humorous dialogues in television shows, learners learn new vocabularies, sentence structures, pronunciation, the nuances associated with the word, and also imbibes the importance of gesture in language learning. Indeed, humorous dialogues in television shows is a means which help in expanding the horizons of the communication skills of the learners.

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Wisdom

Pradeep Chatterjee

From the abysmal depth of my heart
The hymns of younder Heaven rise
All confused thoughts are torn apart
And the inner world becomes wise.
Under the sky I stood engrossed in a thought
From meditation, my inward strength, I got.

Piercing the shroud of ignorance
The wisdom of God revealed
If a spark of that, in my poem, contains
My desire of composing, is fulfilled.
Ushering in the "New" let the Heavenly storm
Wreck my "Old" and the path to salvation form.

Oh! My mind, being boundless, take
The taste of Life's Nectar
Let all the fetters on my body, break
Let my soul, all shackles , shatter.
Tuning with that tune, let my resonant life
In seclusion, ceaselessly play a fife.

Oh! The eternally glorified silence
On thy peaceful lap
Take my soul in the body's absence

When my bondage, with world, snap.
Transformed to a dot, I will, with the ultimate dot
Get merged with my soul, mind and thought.

Hence, in elated spirit I drink this spring
Which may not last forever
And casting off all gloom, I bring
Myself in a hallowed exposure.
Let that glory be with me till the last
The flag of freedom fastened to my heart.

Wake up the Lord of music and of Light
In my searching heart
And keep me like an eremite
In your glorious hut.
The voice of the sages in my ears, chime
Breaking the boundary of eternal time.

(Composed in 1987)

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 Calcuttta 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 unfailing, unutopian 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 devasted 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.

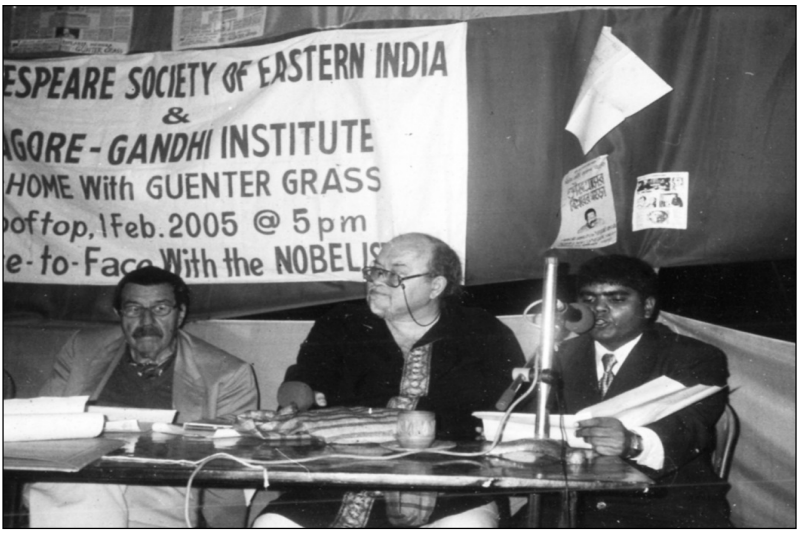
What emerged for the founders of TGI through long and frequent interactive encounters with *Herr Grass,* out of many many sessions of creative and intellectual *'adda',* from the close camaraderie of translating and putting on stage Grass's play *The Plebians Rehearse the Uprising (Biplaber Mohora* in 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.

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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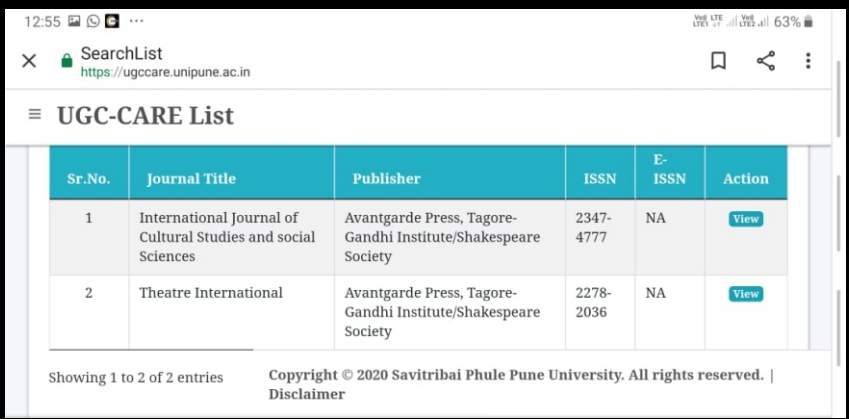

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