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Chief Editor
GAURI SHANKAR JHA

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Pandemics: A Vedantic Perspective

AWDHESH KUMAR JHA

Human civilization has now been thousands of years old but with the pace of development along the clumsy lines of materialism, it at times seems reaching the point of self-destruction. No matter what polity and which diplomacy the people at large adopt, the ultimate sufferer is the common man. Wars, starvation, and epidemics know no colour, no race, no political or religious belief. Trauma issued forth by the above three is man-made. The reason behind the trauma lies in deliberate human error, be it the wars or the pandemics. To some extent one can say that diseases are the divine curse due to inordinate adventurism of unlimited desire and gratification. Of course with increased and aggravated grimness, the pandemics is more lethal as it is truly global and fatal than the wars, the entire 20th century is remembered as a time of crisis, countless death by wars, epidemics, natural calamities and organised human killings enacted by the unbridled materialistic and demonic mindset of the ruler. It is even more peculiar to see that excessive reliance and dependency on science has made human desire more careless than ever. Perhaps though out of context, T.S. Eliot's poem and the protagonist *Gerontion* understands the totality of the problem being faced by the general humanity created by "*handful of dust*" and comments with a bitterness and derision on the prevailing crisis:

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? (CPP38)

In Indian philosophical cauldron, the sages have time and again emphasized the need to transcend the realm of flesh. Lack of *knowledge* and excessive indulgence in materialistic pleasure has aggravated the personal suffering and, time and again, the entire world has been made to suffer too. In the back drop of the inability to overt the predicament caused by the failed attempts to harmonise matter and spirit on one hand and knowledge and ignorance on the other, *Gerontion* continues:

*Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities.* (CPP38)*

The reason behind the trauma in the history lies in deliberate human error, be it the wars or the pandemics. Of course with increased and aggravated grimness, the pandemics are more lethal as it is truly global and fatal than the wars.

This is a fact that there has been a scope of controlling the epidemics, but the hunger and orgy in all its ugly forms have remained unbridled. The knowledge of the causes of the disease and the invention of medicines have certainly healed the pains and controlled the death by epidemics and other dreaded diseases. But the excessive reliance on the modern medicine has made the desire of maximum pleasure even more intense and untameable. The 21st Century has begun with even more formidable challenges threatening the existence of life on earth.

Desire needs always to be checked and regulated with certain discipline otherwise it brings catastrophe. Desire is controlled by mind which itself is an unbridled horse with swiftest speed. So the mind is first to be made pacified by the realisation of the good and evil impact of what it would deliver out of its roaming or travelling. Travelling is a disciplined movement resulting in something good, roaming is wandering in quest of an adventurous experience; good and evil both. So our sages have prescribed us to travel most, and roam least.

The menace of the time is the terrorising and deadly effect of the outspread of a virus named COVID19. It first caused havoc in China and is unanimously it is accredited to the food-habit of the non-vegetarians who devour everything in the name of arousing pleasurable powers etc. They also take it for their change of the taste. The virus has a very complicated way of trapping the humans and animals and perhaps novel one, hence named Novel corona virus. Imaginative fear is more tormenting and traumatic than the real fear. The infection is fatal because it has no cure and it can be resisted by the internally built strength of immunity. It is here that the urgency of finding a safe way to fight this enemy is felt worldwide. Ours is a responsibility also to come out of this crisis. But this can be possible not by a stereotyped mechanical approach as we did in the past while dealing with other diseases like AIDS or Plague or T.B. Covid19 can be eradicated by only the way of cultivating a healthy way of life in which Spirituality serves as saviour of the humanity at large.

Chhandogya Upanishad says:

*Aharashuddhau Sattvashuddhih Sattvashuddhau Dhruva Smratih,
Smrutilambhe Sarvagranthinam Vipramokshah.*

Meaning: Purity of food helps in purifying the inner self. Purification of the inner self and hence of the mind and intellect, accelerates elimination of illusions and ignorance. This in turn, paves the way for salvation of the soul. The sages of the Vedic times, the rishis, had researched and categorized the gross and subtle qualities and effects of food in three categories satvika, rajasika and tamasika. They had also enjoined that those desirous of having the purity, piety and sagacity of thoughts, feelings and emotions along with the vibrant health of the body, should avoid tamasika and rajasika food and take only satvika food.

They who don't have the culture of food, can never have a strong immune system. The mindless quest and experimentation for pleasure has taken the body far away from the Spirit. The world forgets soon that the material success is more infectious than any disease.

The Rig Veda recites a very relevant warning for all ages ,but it is even more relevant now when we are facing the Covid menace.

Priya tashtani may kapirvyaktavyaddushat

Shiro nvasya raavisham n sugam dushkrite bhuvamvishvasmadeendra uttarah (10/06/05)

The above recitation is a serious message that the resultant product of the excessive indulgence in mundane pleasure derived by the sense organs goads the humans to the state of helplessness and forces them to fall down. Such acts are foolish to the extent of bringing even catastrophe contrary to the desire to get the bliss or happiness in life. It is yet another instance to signify the pious purpose of making life free from sufferings caused by agony of untimely or pre-matured death. obviously, the root of such ominous situation lies in the mindless unbridled obsessive hunger of all forms: physical and material.

Much has been told about the reason how the latest virus named Corona (Covid-19) infects the people. Unfortunately, there are only a few numbers of people to discuss why this menace has occurred and taken the entire world in its claws. And if at all one speaks, it is more from political reasons and least from the humanitarian. Indian way of contemplation has enough to find the solution to these pandemics, both for prevention and remedy, which the people of India have been observing in the form of hygiene, cleanliness, sanitation and above all the regard for the balanced Eco-system. Hence it is more urgent to understand the message hidden in the concept of Dharma and Adharma, which is far different from the term Religion practised in other forms of divinity. The fact of the matter is that the Indian way of life is all about the Art of Life, rarely envisaged elsewhere. Dharma explains what is acceptable in order to make artful way of living and Adharma is all about negating whichever makes life painful. It is here that the Indian texts appeal to keep the outer world sanitized and the inner self strong enough to dispel all the disastrous effects of filthy and negative particles present in the air and causing epidemics.

Acharya Charak says that the epidemics (*Janpadodhvanshak*) happen because people start neglecting dharma and practising adharma. We find this statement verified in the case of Covid19 as it has originated from the utter carelessness towards cleanliness and blind demonic pursuit of pleasure. When forbidden conduct becomes the life style of the people, in the form of food habit and other forms of lust-laden orgy, all types of miseries are bound to fall on them. These miseries have been classified by our sages as Daihik, Daivik and Bhoutik (concerning body, divinity and matter). Acharya Charak has assigned supreme value to the conduct not only to live healthy but also to make an environment for other creatures which includes the flora and fauna to flourish. Indian sages

foresight was so confirmed about the possibility of pandemics that they devoted a separate discourse on the health and welfare of the people which they handed over to the humanity at large in the form of Ayurved (the Atharva Veda). The Upanishadas and the Sanhitas are the elaborations of the synthetically coded messages available in the Vedas for easy understanding by the common mass. These texts have been in the service ever since where the emphasis has been laid more on the conduct and sensibility of the humans and where the environment is in the core of the scheme of happy life. That is why Charak says:

Deshkalatmavijnyanam sdvrittasyanuvarttanam

Covid-19 effect has brought us to point of turning back to introspect whether the material happiness has made the world really happy and the worth-living. It is here that we need to turn to do a surgery to locate the spot in our being where we have left the rejuvenating and reviving elements pallied by the desire of sensory pleasures. It is necessary to understand the connection between human happiness and human nature. Man is the most intellectually developed animal and is always in search of the ultimate. He continues experimenting and doing so, at times he disconnects himself from the scheme of the Cosmic Order. The Upanishad has already spoken of the vast cosmic reality which can be comprehended only in part, can be accessed up to a very small range and cannot be managed in any circumstance.

Any attempt to manage the scheme of the cosmic order has caused huge damage to this scheme of the cosmic order and in order to repair and recover from this damage, cosmic order is at work resulting into irreparable loss to the living world. However the Cosmic Power involves the entire living world to put to suffer but the innocent, poor, and the speechless animals and other objects of nature suffer most. Whatever has become a problem is mostly manmade and because of the a desire to govern the uncontrollable cosmic reality. Indian sages had very early understood the facts of the Cosmic scheme of the Being and so they visualised and felt the presence of the scheme in each and every particle, living or non-living .India has a always a special place for the five fundamental factors constituting life : Earth, Space, Water, Air and Fire. These are evenly poised and harmonised to make life possible. They have also made valuable comments in the Vedas regarding their importance in the world. The later Sages have further elaborated and confirmed the significance of the constituents of the cosmic order. Upanishads are the epitome of wisdom. Upanishads recommends that the essential fragility of human nature can be strengthened to the extent of being unbreakable or imperishable by observing a serene approach to the Outer World comprising vast space as well as other terrestrial object like humans, animals, visible or invisible insects and organisms, plants, trees everything. Upanishad emphasises the culturization of Human nature considering the queerness evident in intellect. The present challenge posed by the micro non-living virus Covid-19 can be faced fought

and overcome by the culturization of human nature by bringing a change in human approach to the Cosmic Scheme which the Upanishad has provided once for all and ever. It is the art of life which may build the human world a safe and secure place to live for the future generation. Here comes the Upanishad for our help where we find a core message : “ Live a balanced life, play your part.” Upanishadic message elucidates that the Self is not the part of the Body and to know the Self is a continuous exercise to know the Brahma as the Brahma lies within and without also. The Brahma is perceivable by the inner senses, not through the external sense organs or its enjoyment. No Pandemics from the Vedantic perspective are new, nor incurable. The menace created by the Pandemics should be taken as challenge posed by some demonic mindset, their blind mindless quest for the ultimate materialistic orgy and nothing else. The very involvement with worldly pleasure causes numerous problems and in order to calm and pacify the insatiable thirst of pleasure, there is a beautiful message hidden in the famous prayer of requesting the Cosmic Power for peace to everything, everyone:

*Om Dyauh Shaantir-Antarikssam Shaantih
Prthivii Shaantir-Aapah Shaantir-Ossadhyah Shaantih |
Vanaspatayah Shaantir-Vishvedevaah Shaantir-Brahma Shaantih
Sarvam Shaantih Shaantir-Eva Shaantih Saa Maa Shaantir-Edhi |
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih*

Peace is the supreme quest; Peace is the most cherished state. It is peace which takes one to the door of knowledge of the secret of all joy, the Sat, the Chitta, the Anand. Once the self is identified, there remains no agony, no threat, nor fear of death. The following Shloka, the origin of which is still not confirmed, although many believe in the Vrihadaranyak Upnishad (1.4.14), exhibits the broadness of appeal: still a potent wish for prosperity, health and peace:

*Sarvesam mangalam bhuyat sarve santu niramayah
Sarve bhadrani pasyantu ma kascidduhkhabhag bhavet
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih.*

*Associate Professor of English
T.M. B. University, Bhagalpur*

Notes

1. CPP: (The complete poems and plays of T. S. Eliot, London: Faber and Faber, 1975.
2. Chhandogya Upanishad: Internet (Facebook)
3. Rigved: Dasham Mandalam

For all references, the materials available on internet have been taken.

Crisis Equalises all Unravelling Human Nature: A Study of Aesop's Fables

MADHVI LATA

The present circumstance of the world, in view of a Pandemic, has compelled everyone to sanitise their worldview. It is a crisiswreaking havoc globally wherein everybody has a blurred image unable to portend what lies ahead and waiting what is in the offing for whole humanity. Pandemic has always been a crucible for humans as it unearths human demeanour starkly naked and brings out the true nature of people. Pan(epi)demic, from time to time, has struck the world with horrendous repercussions with thousands and millions losing lives. As a matter of fact, almost all, be it a pandemic or epidemic, have been zoonotic; it is a disease that can be transmitted from animals to people or, more specifically, a disease that normally exists in animals but that can infect humans. There are several such instances ranging from plague, rabies, multiple flues, to corona. Initial carriers of these pan(epi)demic were animals; they gradually transmitted disease into humans, infecting them globally.

Human responses to these diseases entail to examine them closely. Responses initially result into petty ludicrous view of the disease which gradually turns into grave. They underestimate its disastrous consequences, reason may be, humans being short sighted and overestimation of scientific advancement. Without any shadow of doubt, world science experiments have advanced by leaps and bounds, yet there are things which are beyond human capacity and control. Mortality of all living beings is one such thing as scientific advancements are still grappling to resolve the mystery of death.

Interestingly, pandemic responses to humans are something which amaze whole humanity; it is based on parity, no bigotry, nor any arbitrarily practices and it establishes equalisation amongst all. Ironically, it is the one which doesn't discriminate based on social status; to it, all and everyone is equal, be it a person in destitute or a millionaire. The fear of death is real and with fear comes real reflection. It does not spare anything/anybody, nothing lasts.

As Joseph Addison in the essay "Meditations at Westminster Abbey" rightly points out about death, the ultimate ruler that reigns over everyone:

Men and women, friends and enemies, priests and soldiers, monks and prebendaries, were crumbled amongst one another, and blended together in the same common mass; how beauty, strength, and youth, with old age, weakness and deformity, lay undistinguished in the same promiscuous heap of matter.

It is noteworthy that during such crisis true human nature comes unravelling. It exposes the fault lines in human demeanour. It dictates everybody and peels off the garb of artificial behaviour. Critical and crucial moment in life lets us distinguish between a friend and foe. Hard times test the sincerity of people. It brings forth pertinent question that how during such crisis we first think of ourselves while putting others' interest on backfoot. The biggest challenge is to be facing the crisis head on. It exposes community of people at large, interrogating the feeling of "*Oneness of human family*"

Let us understand how the Covid pandemic has made us helpless, restraining inside home, compelling to indulge in wide array of chores. It may also be viewed an opportunity to devote into everything that wouldn't have been possible if the situation had not risen.

Understanding Method in Madness, Crazy Chase, and Messy Maze

Now when all of us are caught up in crisis we have been trying to do certain things which earlier would never have crept into our mind. Let's look at what are these:

It appears life has become topsy-turvy, wheeling back and forth without destination to stop. Everything that was a status symbol has come down to insignificance. Nonetheless, this shift is quite understandable as well as justifiable as it shows a kind of method behind everything. People are turning back to indigenous (local) from Global; from public platform to decent domesticity; from playing outside to planting and nurturing inside home; from sitting in big multiplex cinema halls to cozy cushions and Netflixing.

However, the second aspect of dealing with covid is crazy chase. It encompasses a string of such chase such as: reading classic timeless tales, watching cultural programmes (Ramayana, Mahabharata), flipping photo album and reminiscing past hoydenish and lukewarm memories. It also transports our mind back in those days when all family members used to be together and share each sweet and sour moment without any grudges. *Fame and Fan* following too is taking a backseat. Those whom (celebs) we used to adore and endear are now no longer exist in our mind (at least at this point in time). Chase in kitchen for dishes is highly ostensible. Not only do women but men too have stepped in and whetting their culinary curiosity. Also, it has pushed various large gatherings of academic interactions to one screen of the phone handset. There is a number of such activities.

Now all this catalyzes into a messy maze wherein everybody is apprehensive not knowing how things will unfold further. To comprehend a bright future seems far cry from present situation. What will be consequences of post Covid situation is something too soon to comment on. The ongoing maze may prove to be absolute onslaught which many people may not be able to overcome and eventually succumb to it. Nonetheless, it may also be possible

that social solidarity will emerge triumphant and will force the foe to flee. These things are yet to be seen.

A Select Allegorical lesson of Aesop's Fables for Humanity

Aesop fables highlight the competitive realities of life while remaining crisply short and to the point. Though the life and history of Aesop is very obscure, yet the Greek historian Herodotus recorded Aesop as a real person. Real or imaginary, Aesop's name is inseparable from the lucidly told fables that are laden with his worldly wisdom. This is also an attempt at showing the natural progression of events that we think would occur in these situations (pandemic). These narratives are allegorized in the form of animal characters with undercurrent of moral and social commentary and thoughtfulness. These reflect our relations : *friend, neighbour, families and ourselves during critical time*. The first fable is quite popular in the world, travelling from generation to generation since time immemorial. It very likely and pertinently reveals the deceit of a friend, who to save himself during a crisis, betrays friendship and became opportunist. The story is representation of human nature, highly symbol laden.

The Travellers and the Bear. Two friends, travelling together, encountered a bear. Without thinking about his companion, one of the travellers, a nimble fellow, climbed up a tree in great fear and hid himself. The other realised that he had no chance to fight the bear, so he threw himself on the ground and pretended to be dead, for he had heard that a bear will never touch a dead body. As he lay there, the bear came up to his head and sniffed his nose, ears and heart, but the man remained still and held his breath. Finally, the bear was convinced that he was dead and walked away. When the bear was out of sight, the other traveller came up to him and asked what the bear said in his ear. He replied, "He merely told me to watch out for the company I keep and not to trust people who abandon their friends in difficult times".

The story construes a social allegory wherein two friends who represent human beings and the bear is allegorised as the present critical and crucial pandemic. As in the fable the one friend who robs the other friend of his loyal friendship is symbolically a representation of solipsistic individuals who put their welfare and safety above all. However, the other friend with sage wisdom comes up with some sort of solution to deal and survive the crisis. It is also to be noted that the disloyal friend in the story may give reflection of any individual living in society who may turn back when help is needed. Subsequently, the undercurrent moral message imparts that trust is the object that seal friendship. Togetherness and faith strengthen solidarity and can be helpful to overcome such crucial time.

Oneness need of the hour to battle a war like situation. We need to cling to humanity by being empathetic to one another; and it can help shouldering

the burden of the moment and keep the predicament at a bay. In reverse situation, what repercussion would come along is the underlying social send off message in the next fable.

The Horse and the Loaded Donkey: There was once a man who owned a horse and a donkey. Whenever he took trips, he tended to spare the horse and put all the burden on the donkey's back. Since the donkey had been ailing for sometime, he asked the horse one day to relieve him of part of his load while on a trip.

"If you take a fair portion of the load," he said, "I will soon get well again. But if you refuse to help me, this weight will kill me."

The horse, however, told the donkey to get on with it and to stop troubling him with his complaints. The donkey jogged in silence, but he was soon overcome by the weight of his burden and dropped dead in his tracks, just as he had predicted. Consequently, the master came up, untied the load from the dead donkey, put it on the horse's back, and made him carry the donkey's carcass in addition.

"That's what I get for my bad disposition!" The horse groaned.

The above story demands us to be in unison to fight the pandemic and not to behave like the one who doesn't want to share the burden. The allegorised idea lies in the story unravels the fact that we are to help all those who are suffering miserably in given circumstances. Our goodness begets fruit in future that we may not be aware of as to when and in what form. The moral for humanity in the fable rakes up the fact of our survival which is in jeopardy at the moment.

The Dove and the Ant: This fable sensitises how living beings can survive by existing in consonance with each other; to offer help to one another is marked by the inherent quality of people, embedded within the nature of everyone.

It is highly significant to save helping nature by not letting it get corrupted and manipulated. Human community is one of the cycles wherein all the people need to be living a life following societal normative standards, safeguarding everyone, ensuring to be with each other in dire need of unannounced calamity. The following moral lesson posits the same.

An ant went to a fountain to quench his thirst, but he tumbled in and began to drown. Fortunately, a dove happened to be sitting on a nearby tree and saw the Ant's predicament. So she plucked a leaf off the tree and let it drop into the water. The ant climbed on top of it and was soon washed ashore. Shortly afterward a bird catcher came by, spread his net, and was about to ensnare the dove when an Ant bit his heel. The man let out a cry and dropped his net. Realising that she was in danger, the dove flew safely away.

The story draws a parallel between good nature of people and that of the Dove and Ant. As Dove selflessly stood for Ant in difficult time so does the Ant help the Dove in return. Had the Dove been indifferent by not helping

the Ant at the outset ,very likely,it would not have been offered the help either. So people should help each other without having ulterior motive ; sometimes a person's good deeds get credited in miraculous form to his family members owing to interconnectedness. So the feeling of *Oneness* and *Interconnectedness* is of paramount importance to row the boat of life ; it can strive any doldrum and save it from tipping the balance with the help of each other. This is how life should be viewed, all living in harmony and in absolute accordance with the nature of humanity.

Nowadays, on account of perilous pandemic, people have been realizing and thinking of *Back to the Land Movement*. It is an agrarian movements across different historical periods. The common thread is a call for people to take up smallholding and to grow food from the land with an emphasis on a greater degree of self- sufficiency , autonomy and local community than found in a prevailing industrial or post industrial way of life. There have been a variety of motives behind such movements, such as *social reform, self-reliant, connectedness* to nature and to *combat situation like present pandemics*. The significance of countryside/rural life style has been gaining prominence as to ascertain safety and sustainability. Rural settling offers a new gateway to people living life peacefully in fresh air, far away from contaminated urban life. The emphasis is also due to having less exposure to crowd, easily maintaining social distancing and the top of it, the availability of various commodities straight from scratch. Relating to the same instance next story of Aesop's fables is likely to be of high relevance regardless of time and space. It narrates the two contrasting life style—urban and rural and the following consequences. The lasting impact of message in the narrative reveals *Rural peace is preferable to big town buzz*.

The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse: Once upon a time a country mouse, who had a friend in town, invited him to pay a visit in the country for old acquaintances' sake. After the invitation was accepted, the country mouse, though plain, coarse, and somewhat frugal, opened his heart and pantry to honour his old friend and to show him the proper hospitality. There was not a morsel which he had carefully stored that he did not bring forth out of its larder—peas and barley, cheese parings and nuts—with the hope that the quantity would make up for what he feared was wanting in quality to suit the taste of his elegant friend. In turn, the town mouse condescended to nibble a little here and there in a dainty manner while the host sat munching a blade of barley straw. In their after dinner chat the town mouse said to the country mouse, “ How is it, my good friend, that you can endure this boring and crude life? You live like a toad in hole. You can't really prefer these solitary rocks and woods to streets teeming with carriages and people. Upon my word of honour, you are wasting your time in such a miserable existence. You must make the most of your life while it lasts. As you know, a mouse does not live forever. So, come with me this very night, and I'll show you all around the town and what life is about.”

Overcome by his friend's fine words and polished manner, the country mouse agreed, and they set out together on their journey to the town. It was late in the evening when they crept stealthily into the city and midnight before they reached the large house, which was the town mouse's residence. There were couches of crimson velvet, ivory carvings, and everything one could imagine that indicated wealth and luxury. On the table were the remains of a splendid banquet from all the choicest shops ransacked the day before to make sure that the guests, already departed, would be satisfied. It was now the town mouse's turn to play host, and he placed his country friend on a purple cushion, ran back and forth to supply all his needs, and pressed dish upon dish on him and delicacy upon delicacy. Of course, the town mouse tasted each and every course before he ventured to place it before his rustic cushion, as though he were waiting on a king. In turn, the country mouse made himself quite at home and blessed the good fortune that had brought about such a change in his way of life. In the middle of his enjoyment, however, just as he was thinking contemptuously of the poor meals that he had been accustomed to eating, the door suddenly flew open, and a group of revellers, who were returning from a late party, burst into the room. The frightened friends jumped from the table and hid themselves in the very first corner they could reach. No sooner did they dare creep out again than the barking of dogs drove them back with even greater terror than before. Gradually, when things seemed quiet, the country mouse crept out from his hiding place and whispered good-bye to his elegant friend." This fine mode of living may be all right for those who like it," he said. " But I'd rather have a crust in peace and safety than all your fine things in the midst of such alarm and terror."

Undisputedly a countryside life gives longevity as it provides natural elements pure and unadulterated. It keeps away from the humdrum of urban life. However, the importance of science, medicine, experiments cannot be devalued. The fable tells that simple and content life is better than being at risk of life danger. The pandemic reinforces need of social distancing which is a legitimate concern people living in big cities. In addition to it, fear has gripped the world due to which a serious reflection has descended. Country side and urban both have some pros and cons. Rural areas are safe from danger of spread of disease rapidly as it has less crowd as compared to cities, yet no place is spared from spread of the pandemic. Cities have horde of crowds, but it has accessibility of tracing and testing which may not be available in rural areas so easily.

Conclusion

Hope is the thing that perches in the Soul for a better world. In the midst of the pandemic (Corona) one thing people cling to is *Hope*. Hope for better tomorrow to come. All across the globe prayers are being said; asking for

positivity and to hold on to present situation. It invigorates new energy with promise of a bright new day; things will once again be the same. Future with hope holds good for all. As of now, we have to strike balance in crisis. Albert Camus, in his novel *The Plague*, states that amalgam of two aspects is essential: *Existentialism and Humanism*. He points out the note of optimism during time of hopelessness. It (hope) reveals man's incessant fight with death and human sufferings, pain and predicament. Thomas Hardy, in the poem *Song of Hope*, imagines beautiful tomorrow. The poem begins, "O sweet Tomorrow! After To-day there well away the sense of sorrow. Then let us borrow Hope, for a gleaming soon will be Streaming..."

American author Emily Dickinson robustly conveys the idea of hope instrumental for everyone. The poem *Hope* by her says that it sings the tune without the words and never stops at all. It appears to be true amid the pandemic. People all across holding hope and faith for better world to come soon and this feeling is unstoppable.

Pandemic/(epidemic) is a global crisis, it calls for collective response to fight without demonstrating tension between self-interest and social solidarity. To survive the situation all have to show common concern for humanity. We must hold hope and usher our beliefs that this time too shall pass. To defeat any crisis optimistic view and positive affirmations are to be blended in. Camus posits that

human beings, as mortals, live under an inexplicable, irrational, completely absurd death sentence. Nevertheless, he also believes that people are capable of giving their lives meaning. The most meaningful action is to choose to fight suffering and pain.

The UN chief said in a message that the pandemic phase is a call for responsibility and solidarity. As we fight the virus, we cannot let fear go viral, together we can change the course of this pandemic. He called on every government to step up and scale up their efforts, adding that, *as we mourn all those who have lost lives and the many families who are suffering, we must show solidarity with the most vulnerable –the elderly, the sick, those without reliable healthcare, and those on the edge of poverty*. Until then, we need to equip ourselves with the personal protection of masks, gloves and also conform to new culture of the *social distancing and isolation*.

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An Evaluation of Naturalism in the Plays of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*

UMESH CHANDRA

Naturalism is closely connected with realism but it has also some fundamental difference with realism. Ronald Peacock believes that the movement of "realism" sharpened latter into the form of "naturalism". (210) Lucacs judges it as "new realism", "mechanical average", essentially and sharply "opposite to the traditions of the old realism" (90-91). In the school of philosophy everything in the world is depends on natural laws, not on spiritual or supernatural reason. Edward Quinn states that, "The basic effort of naturalism lay in the attempt to produce a scientifically accurate depiction of life even at the cost of representing ugliness and discord" (280) while Frank Norris considers that it "is a form of romanticism, not an inner circle of realism." (qtd. in Wimsat, 459) Vsevolod Meyhold remarks that, "The Naturalistic Theatre resembled a factory: everything on stage had to be "as in life" and transformed into a shop of museum pieces" (319). Naturalism depicts the rough and objective portrayal of the society.

Emile Zola, is the most important thinker of naturalist school who holds that "the time has come to produce plays of reality." (qtd in Gaskell, 14) He stresses on the literal presentation of the realities of the society in a scientific method. Zola argues "for a scientific approach through the complete objectivity of the writer, who should never allow his own ideas or outlook to intrude. He should observe, record, and experiment with a complete sense of detachment and with the sole aim of demonstrating the truth" (Brockett, 275). Wimsatt and Brooks consider "Naturalism" as "socially oriented" and they affirm that "It show[s] a modern conscience for the plight of the working classes. It deal[s] with ordinary folk here and now, or with the kind of destiny and problems that most people experienced[s]" (460- 61) They also disapprove Zola's method of naturalism especially in literature. For them, Zola's approach to reality is "similar to that of a newspaper reporter". (qtd. in Lucacs, 90)

Naturalist drama presents harsh realities and ugly picture of the society. This drama influences the imaginative and comprehensive faculty of the audience. Vsevolod Meyerhold asserts that, "The Naturalistic Theatre not only denies the playgoer the ability to dream, but even the ability to understand intelligent conversation on stage." (316) Anton Chekhov applies the realistic

approach in his writings to expose the harsh realities of the contemporary Russian society. However, His plays reflect the naturalistic approach when these plays are staged. Contrary to this Harold Pinter uses the naturalist approach to demonstrate the similar elements of contemporary British society. Pinter appears to believe in the realistic depiction of the society, so he is very much close to the naturalism that reflects in his drama.

The Seagull

Anton Chekhov is chiefly known for his stories throughout the world. He has also produced remarkable plays with the use of new techniques and ideas. Chekhov is basically a doctor who believes in the accurate diagnosis of the disease so that a patient can be cured properly. Likewise, his writings display the report card of the contemporary Russian society along with all sorts of problems. It is noteworthy that Chekhov leaves his reader and audience in search of treatment of the problems through the analysis of his writings. Coughlan considers “Chekhov’s plays are often seen purely as metaphors for the decline of the Russian bourgeoisie, but to see them only in this context is to dilute the impact of the work.” (63-64) Therefore, his plays should not be seen in single dimension but in various aspects. He has not created noble characters; kings or lords of the classical writings and romances, but produced common human beings of Russian society.

Chekhov is objective in the portrayal of society in his writings. According to him, “the power of great writers lay not in the strength of their objectivity but in the ultimate persuasiveness of their aim” (Moravceovich 293). His plays are associated with the naturalism along with the trend of surrealism that can be traced in some events of the plays. Coughlan states that, “without this aura of artifice, the characters would be sympathetic as opposed to pathetic, forcing the audience to empathize with their plight. Chekhov has been held up as a standard of 18th-century realism, but, in fact, he creates a surreal environment where the suffering can safely be comic” (63). It is because his plays are related with dreams and images rather than practical realities of the material world. Chekhov has created the characters that appear as dreaming about their lives and their future but it was the trend of the contemporary Russian society.

However, Chekhov has been considered as a naturalist playwright because his writings display the truthful portrayal of the existing Russian society. Apart from this his plays are taken as naturalist because of Stanislavsky who directed and influenced the performances of Chekhov’s plays. Stanislavsky incorporated various literary devices and dramatic techniques especially stage directions and “Zola’s and Antoine’s Naturalism was quickly adopted in every theatrical culture from the Atlantic to Moscow.” (Weber 16) Stanislavsky considers naturalism important and he “insist[s] that the real world be represented on the stage. By placing these characters and their suffering in a “real-world”

environment, we must feel for them, we must engage them on an emotional level and the suffering becomes real.” (Coughlan: 68) Therefore, Stanislavsky’s association with Chekhov’s plays is very much significant for considering them in the tradition of naturalism.

Patrice Pavis argues differently who states that “‘Modern’ *Chekhov* would be what Stanislavski revealed to us, despite the author’s protests in the face of naturalistic excess.” (69) Chekhov also appears to be resistant against unnecessary exercise of naturalism in literature. But it is a fact that he has applied naturalist approach in his writings. John Lahr also considers him to be influenced by the naturalist approach of the theatre. He states that “Naturalism has its roots in a scientific approach which melds man inextricably to his environment, studying him as a complex amalgam of audible rhythms and spectacular mutations for survival. Chekhov, the passionate doctor, applied this discipline to the ailing conventional drama of his time.” (137) Chekhov’s plays appear to reflect a good command over the contemporary trends which were prevalent in 19th century Russian literature. It seems that Naturalism as technical tool for the performance of strengthens his plays but it is also apparent that the realistic approach of his plays overpowers the impact of naturalism. Andrew Coughlan contradicts that, “Naturalism, for Chekhov, does not mean literal nature. It simply means that the setting of the stage must be natural to the stage and to the action taking place on the stage. Therefore, a setting in the country need not be populated with real plants and real animals hopping around.” (78)

The Seagull is very important production by Chekhov and it is considered as a comic play with its symbolism. Critics also consider this play as a surrealist play, but this play reflects deep realism in it. From the beginning of the play one can easily see the portrayal of social reality. Medviedenko, the husband of Masha, is a school teacher and he represents working class of Russian society. He makes an effort to make clear his idea of happiness. This is not only his idea of leading a happy life but it reflects the standpoint of the entire working class of the exiting society. He says that, “...but the reality is this: there is myself and my mother and two sisters and a little brother, and my total salary is twenty-three roubles. We have to eat and drink, don’t we? And by tea and sugar. And tobacco. So try and manage on that.” (1:83) This statement suggests a class which is leading the life in minimum resources. Medviedenko also tells Trigorin about the hardship led by a teacher.

In *The Seagull*, Treplov, a dramatist is criticized for his idea and craft of the plays. Even his own mother, Arkadina, an established actress, is an unkind critic of his plays. She never encourages his son and his talent but she condemns his exercise of producing an original and inventive drama. She states on his writings: “Really? However, he didn’t choose some ordinary play, but made us listen to these decadent ravings. As a joke I am prepared to listen to raving,

but here we have claims to new form, to a new age in art. And in my opinion, there are no new forms here but bad behaviour.” (1: 94) Soon after, she responds over Trigorin’s advocacy of the freedom of a writer. She underestimates Treplyov’s creation in her statement with the ridiculous tone. She says that, “Let him write as he wants and as he is able to, only let him leave me in peace.” (1: 94) Even She goes beyond this and she mocks Treplyov for the structure of his play and also for his perception of the theatre.

Arkadina is very much fond of Trigorin’s writing. When she was applying bandage over Treplyov’s wound, both mother and son discuss over the issue regarding the clash between Trigorin and Treplyov. She appreciates Trigorine which stimulates Treplyov who starts mocking Trigorin. Arkadina stops him to utter repulsive words for Trigorin because she respects Trigorin. However Treplyov openly condemns him and states, “And I don’t admire him. You want me too to think him genius, but I’m sorry, I can’t lie, his books make me feel sick.” (3: 118) Being failed in his love and life, Treplyov’s leads to one more effort for his love, and this is suicide which was a reality of Chekhov’s 19th century Russia.

The play reveals the generation gap; the older generation tries to show superiority over the younger generation. This conflict can be seen in the play in the name of disagreement on the form of theatre. Treplyov thinks differently in comparison with his senior artists and writers. His uncle Sorin has distrustful feelings for his innovative drama. But Treplyov ardently argues, “We need new forms. We need new forms, but if there aren’t any, it’s better to have nothing.” (1: 87) His argument points out the desire for revolution in literary and cultural fields in 19th century Russia.

Chekhov appears inclined to the realist thinkers and writers that is why he praises them through Treplyov who compares Trigorin with Russian classical writers and refutes his writings. He says that, “He is an intelligent man, simple, a little – you know, melancholic. Very decent. He’s a long way short of forty but he’s already famous, and well-fed ... his writing, well – what should I tell you? Pleasant, talented, but ... after Tolstoy or Zola you wouldn’t want to read Trigorin.” (1: 87) Treplyov is the representative of innovative ideas in theatre while Nina believes in conventional form. This conflict between Teplyov and her mother is also apparent; Treplyov says that, “She also knows that I have no respect for the theatre. She loves the theatre, she thinks that she serves the mankind, serves a sacred art, but I think the modern theatre is just cliché and prejudice.” (1: 86) It is evident here that Treplyov represents the trend of innovative drama against the prevalent theatre in 19th century Russia. Chekhov himself was against the established theatre in his time, and initially his plays were refuted by the contemporary critics.

Sorin expresses his dislike for the life style in rural areas. According to him, “The country’s not really for me, old man, and of course I’ll never get

accustomed to life here.” (1: 84) It is a common attitude amongst elite people in 19th century Russia. Arkadina also shows the same attitude. She says that, “Oh, what can be more boring than this nice rural tedium. It’s hot, it’s quiet, everyone talks philosophy ... it’s good to be with you, my friends, pleasant to listen to you, but ... to sit in a hotel room and learn a part is so much better.” (2: 103) Although her son and brother lives in the countryside, but she dislikes this place where she spent her childhood period and initial career as an artist. In fact, it reflects the deterioration of the feudal and elite class. Chekhov exposes the moral bankruptcy of this class. It can be seen in Nina’s pathetic life which is result of the misdeeds by Trigorin. Nina is infatuated to this author but finally gets pain and betrayal because of his ethical bankruptcy.

Thus, *The Seagull* appears as the portrayal of various realities of Russian society. The play brings out real people exactly as they are present in the society. This is a quality in literature which is important for both realism and naturalism. Stanislavsky has projected this idea in Russian theatre. Guthrie confirms that, “Stanislavsky preached a method based upon first-hand observation, rather than upon imitation of other acting. He also advocated the production of plays which reflected contemporary Russian life in a real way, rather than as a romantic image of elegant manners abroad.” (168) Chekhov portrays the decay in 19th century Russian society in realistic manner through his *The Seagull*. Moreover, the play exposes the Russian life in naturalist manner through several events displayed in the play.

The Caretaker

Harold Pinter is a postwar dramatist and versatile in nature it is the time when literature exposes harsh realities of warfare and exploitation of common people and individuals. Though, Pinter’s drama is not directly about warfare, but his plays displays the impressions of warfare at various levels; psychological, economic, human relationship, and the existential approach of life including absurdity. Hence, it is evident that Pinter brings out the realistic depiction of human life in his plays but he rejects the presence of realism in his plays and says, “If you press me for a definition. I would say that what goes on in my plays is realistic, but what I’m doing is not realism.” (Pinter 11) In his speech on Writing for the Theatre in Bristol he says, “the context has always been, for me, concrete and particular, and the characters concrete also. I’ve never started a play from any kind of abstract idea theory.” (Pinter, Various 21-22) In reality, Pinter takes realism as the tool in his plays for depiction of harsh realities of his time that is why his plays displays post-war British socio-political context and the psychological plane of human mind.

Pinter has been considered as the naturalist playwright. Martin S Reagal writes, “the plays most often appear to be naturalistic in theme and diction, but they also show an obvious concern to escape the conventions or restrictions

of naturalism. And therefore his characters speak a familiar language in an unfamiliar way.” (1) Further He writes, “Pinter focuses on the local and the familiar. His characters, for the most part, bear ordinary names, wear ordinary cloths, and go about their business in definable naturalistic settings. However, within this naturalistic framework, the familiar is often revealed to be disturbingly unfamiliar.” (130–31) So, Pinter’s relationship with realism and naturalism is the outcome of his factual depiction of characters and situations. “Harold Pinter has a phenomenally sensitive ear for the real speech of real people. His dialogue is, superficially at least, of a devastating naturalness.” (Esslin 66) His plays represent the replica of the society and he does not believe to deliver sermon or philosophize the audience or the reader. He believes to produce the literal situation of human being that is more important for the naturalist theatre rather than merely verbal expressions. The idea of naturalism prefers physical movements and body language over verbal effect. Pinter’s *The Caretaker* can be seen as the part of naturalist theatre because of some techniques of naturalism.

Pinter’s *The Caretaker* presents the life of an unidentified tramp, Davies who is in search of a place for himself in the vast and dark world. He fights for a warmth place in this menacing world. After all he attains a place to live. This place is owned by two brothers; Aston and Mick. Davies is appointed as caretaker of the place. This place is a dumped and strange room used as warehouse. Soon after both brothers endeavor to prove that they are the genuine owner of the room. Davies also starts expressing his ownership for the room. Leech scrutinizes these three characters that are alienated and far away from other parts of the world. He states, “There is Davies, a tramp, old, repellent, brutally selfish, in turn cringing and boastful. There is Mick, who claims to own the room and whom we see silently in possession when the curtain first goes up. There is Aston, Mick’s brother, who lets Davies share the room with him.” (27) In fact, these three men are a true representation the people from the post war British society.

Leech takes Davies as the common man who can be easily identified everywhere. He writes, “The tramp Davies is an Everyman figure, looking for good and shelter at the least cost to himself, finding himself in a world where two brothers, strangely different, equally strange, both claim possession.” (29) This tramp is searching a place where he can stay. During his search he encounters Aston who rescues him from a brawl in a café. Aston brings him to his strange place that is unusual from common place. Both brothers appoint this tramp as the caretaker of the place that changes his position in the society. Davies does not express his gratitude for Aston’s human and kind behavior. He seems a self-centric, egoistic, overconfident and bombastic man who starts harassing both brothers. He also attempts to be the owner of the room and to get this he tries everything to develop conflict between both brothers. The

play appears a realistic one because of the situations and characters. Esslin confirms the play as realistic play. “On one level *The Caretaker* is realistic play, almost a slice of life, but on another, deeper level it is a poetic image of the human condition itself: Man fighting for a place, for security, but at the same time deprived of it by the weakness of his own fallible, selfish nature.” (67)

The playwrights of the naturalist school focus on the mechanical features during the production that is quite different from the philosophical conversation amongst characters. Naturalist drama communicates through actions and setting of stage. Pinter’s plays reflect a setting and its stage directions are important for such communication. This setting is enough to enlist his plays as the realistic plays. In *The Caretaker*, Pinter develops similar stage setting through this stage direction: “Aston wears an old tweed overcoat, and under it a thin shabby dark-blue pinstripe suit, single breasted, with a pull over and faded shirt and tie. Davies wears a worn brown over coat, shapeless trousers, a waistcoat, vest, no shirt, and sandals. Aston puts the key in this pocket and closes the door. Davies looks about the room.” (TEP 107)

David Thompson considers the atmosphere of the play as “realistic world of *The Caretaker*” (82) The character of Davies is very much realistic. He is a tramp who boasts about himself and narrates unusual stories of his life. He shares how he abandoned his wife and became a tramp to loiter on road. He says, “I might have been on the road a few years but you can take it from me I’m clean. I keep myself up. That is why I left my wife.” (109) Furthermore he clarifies that his wife was very dirty that forced him to discard her. Davies continuously talks in absurd manner. As a tramp, Davies never lose chance to get shoes from Aston despite the fact he criticizes the size and shape of the shoes. He says, “They’d cripple me in a week. I mean these ones. I got on, they’re no good but at least they’re comfortable.” (109) His behavior exhibits his cunningness that is part of a real tramp.

Aston is introvert person while Mick is extrovert. Mike interrogates Davies who reminds him of his uncle’s brother. Mike’s character creates difficulty for Davies because he is also very talkative like Davies. Mick assigns him the post of the caretaker for the home. But soon after, Davies starts complaining about Aston in spite of doing his job of the caretaker. He says, “He wakes me up! He wakes me up in the middle of the night! Tell me I’m making noises! I tell you I’ve half a mind to give him a mouthful one of these days.” (163) Apart from this, he attempts to develop conflict between both brothers. He states that, “... your brother’ll all along, he’s got sense, not like you...” (171) His behavior is impolite with both brothers. At the end, Mick abandons the place and Aston asks Davies to leave the place because of his noisy conversation.

Therefore, Davies is forced to leave the desired room due to his attitude. In fact he is very much close to some characters created by Chekhov; as Sorin in *The Seagull*, an unsuccessful person in his duties that lead him towards the

futility of life. Likewise Davies fails to carry out his duty assigned by both brothers. Finally he is forced to leave his job, position and the shelter. So, *The Caretaker* represents the human life and its situation in realistic manner. Pinter portrays human situation lacking coherence that is outcome of human being's flaws and behavior. The play is a good attempt of Pinter to expose the severity of human life. Ruby Cohn sympathizes with Davies. According to him, "Of all Pinter's [early] plays, *The Caretaker* makes most bitter commentary on the human condition; instead of allowing an old man to die beaten, the system insists on tantalising him with faint hope, there by immeasurably increasing his final desperate anguish." (119)

Hence, Pinter portrays the characters and the situations of human life in realistic manner with the blend of naturalism. On the opposite of this Bernard Dukore identifies the gradual development; the naturalistic side of his art became less pronounced. (4) Pinter portrays the characters similar to the real human beings of the society. To attain this effect, he applies the method of stage direction, pause, silence and various other techniques that are very much helpful in the naturalistic depiction of the characters. The language has been also crafted to create this naturalist effect. Andrew K. Kennedy estimates Pinter as a naturalist at the level of the use of language and dialogues. (172, 180) Pinter's characters appear to talk in local tongue which is not easy to comprehend but this language creates the naturalist atmosphere and it easy to make it becomes easy to understand the play. Thus, as Chekhov is naturalist playwright only at the level of performance, Pinter is also a naturalist only for some techniques and exact illustration of the society. He appears very much realist at the level of theme and vision because his plays are not merely observation but they are a sign of the established structures that are rotten and must be demolished. So, both playwrights have depicted the harsh realities of human life in naturalist manner that is why they are considered as naturalist playwright despite the fact that both have used naturalism only as technique or in the performance of the play.

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Understanding Adivasi Philosophy through Mahadev Toppo's *Lessons from Forest and Mountain*

SANTOSH KUMAR SONKER

The aim of the paper is to search for elements of Adivasi philosophy as represented in poems of Mahadev Toppo. The paper is divided into three sections: the first deals with the theoretical aspect of Adivasi philosophy, the second deals with the poetic sensibility of Mahadev Toppo, and the third with the analysis of the poems from perspectives of Adivasi philosophy.

I

“‘Adi Darshan’ [Adivasi Philosophy]. . . more than anything else, is a universal philosophy that not only captures our intimate oneness with nature but also restores dignity, humanity and collective conscience to the human race” observes Swati Parasar (*The Indian Express* N Pag). While Hon’ble Governor, Jharkhand Smt. Droupadi Murmu opined in the inaugural address of three-day seminar on Adi-Dharshan: “. . . there are nine types of ‘darshan’ (philosophies) in India. Among these, tribal ‘darshan’ is the best. The people of the tribal communities worship nature, and also offer puja to panchatatva (five elements of nature)” (*Outlook* 2020 N Pag), Hon’ble Chief Minister Shri Hemant Soren spoke that “. . . tribal ‘Darshan’ is a big subject and it is a challenge to understand and research tribal philosophy” (N Pag). Renowned thinker, Ram Dayal Munda observes: “Adi-dharam unfolds before us a way of life based on egalitarian principles, a continuum of nature, ancestor and human, and a symbiosis between human and animal kingdom. It emerges from a lost world the whole of humanity shared once” (x). “Collectivism has always been at the base of Adivasi philosophy”, observes Gunjal Ikir Munda. Vandana Tete has observed:

Adivasi Philosophy is naturalist. Adivasi society attaches much significance to the instructions, discipline and rules of the earth, nature and known as well as unknown directions of the universe. There is no concept of truth-false, beautifully, human-non-human, etc in it and it does not give much importance to man because of his intelligence and wisdom or his humanism. It firmly believes that every creation of the universe—living and non-living—is equal. . . whether it is an insect, a plant, a stone, or a human being. It accepts knowledge, logic, experience and materiality within the discipline of Nature not beyond it. (33)

Further she states:

Adivasi philosophy does not treat invention, experiment, and knowledge from the perspective of commodity and utility but as symbiosical reconciliation and existential harmony with the Earth, Nature and the whole living world. It assumes that human activities and behaviour, process of development should not be contrary to the nature and should not disturb the wholeness rather it should be complimentary to it. It allows and promotes human activities and development to such an extent up to which it is not dangerous to any living or non-living thing, nature and earth and degradation of human life would not commence.¹ (33)

Mahadev Toppo gives a similar view about Adivasi philosophy:

As an Adivasi myself, I feel that it is a philosophy that respects and sustains the inter-relationship between earth, nature and humanity and sees it as one based on co-existence and interdependence. Also, it is opposed to development that preys on humanity and land and that is capitalist, consumerist, feudal, dominant and discriminatory. This is the philosophy of the Adivasis. (2021 N Pag)

To get into Adivasi Philosophy, Adivasiyat is a very instrumental in formulation of approach towards Adivasis. Without understanding what Adivasiyat is, one can neither understand Adivasi life nor Adivasi literature. Lack of knowledge about Adivasiyat may lead a person astray and the person may misinterpret and mislead intelligentsia. Mahadev Toppo defines:

‘Adivasiyat’ is about how the Adivasis see things – their outlook towards life. While valuing and preserving our traditional knowledge, we also need to analyze and reinterpret it. How and what the Adivasis do in keeping with today’s situation and problems and in consonance with their life values is what Adivasiyat is. For instance, Adivasis are often portrayed as anti-development. One should remember that the Adivasis also want development – but in keeping with their needs. They do not want development that gobbles up their land, that takes their life, that is solely focused on making money. In this respect, the world over, the Adivasis disagree with so-called developed and civilized society. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, “civilized society” should dwell seriously on this issue. (2021 N Pag)

Gunjal Ikir Munda opines: “The belief that they are one with nature, not above it makes it difficult for an Adivasi to exploit it. . . . The traditional governance system of Adivasis emphasises on consensus decision-making, which will always be a threat to a system promoting hierarchy where the elements at the lowest level are always dispensable” (2019 N Pag). Due to their philosophy Adivasis are in conflict with the modern world. Thus, Adivasi philosophy can be understood through minute introspection of Adivasi life values embedded in their rituals, religious beliefs, life style, festivals etc.

II

Mahadev Toppo, an Adivasi of Oraon Tribe from Jharkhand, has stirred canonical perspectives of the scholars adding a new rubric to Indian Literature, an umbrella

term for a variety of writings which shed light on the multifarious experiences of people of different castes, communities and ethnic groups living in India. His writings are categorized as Adivasi Literature, a colour out of rainbow of Indian Literature. Talking to Kartik Chaudhury, Mahadev Toppo has observed:

... Adivasi Literature is the literature which views, understands and portrays life's problems and people's concerns from the perspective of the Adivasi, their outlook and their experiences; which talks about man, earth, nature, development, civilization, language, culture, politics, history and geography from their perspective; and which works for the betterment of humanity and our world" (2021, N Pag).

Mahadev Toppo explains the objective of Adivasi Literature:

Literature is not only about entertainment. It is also about recording the struggles of human life, their internal contradictions so that the coming generations can make life better, more peaceful, full of love and more dignified. The earth has enough water, forests and land for all of us but the lust for profit, a business perspective has blinded us. This should be stopped. Otherwise, nature will decide to repair its wounds itself with catastrophic consequences for humans as the corona pandemic has shown. That is why Adivasis advocate protecting and preserving earth, nature and using its resources in a restrained and limited manner. The fact that Adivasis authors have now started talking not only about saving land, forests and water but also about saving their conscience, language, life, roots and sentiments shows that Adivasi Literature is not only about entertainment. It encapsulates the struggle of every person who wants to see this earth green, fertile and healthy, who wants pure air, and water and wants to protect earth and nature. (2021 N Pag)

He deals with the burning issues which Adivasis of India are beset with, however, his critical gaze goes beyond geographical boundaries. He has not only voiced against the problems and predicaments of Adivasis but also raised serious concern for the ecological imbalance caused by the anthropocentric attitude of the modern civilized human beings running after technology. He expresses his worry about the displacement and acculturation of the tribes resulting from developmental policies of government and resists deforestation and exploitation of natural resources. His ideas woven into words constitute poems published in *Lessons from the Forest and Mountain* translated by Santosh Kumar Sonker from Hindi to English. About poems of Mahadev Toppo, Pramod Kumar Jha has remarked: "Poems of Mahadev Toppo are not merely expressions of suffering, dilemma and conflict of a tribal. His poems express fear of increasing dangers and difficulties caused by the scientific and industrial developments on mother earth" (15). Sameer Bhagat, a notable novelist from Jharkhand voicing tribal realities, has appreciated poems of Mahadev Toppo for their universal concern: "Although he [Mahadev Toppo] has son of soil approach in his poems, his poetic solutions as well as his thoughts are global in their appeal" (40). A noted scholar, K Satchidanandan has remarked:

Mahadev Toppo's poems are energetic and powerful statements about the identity and traditions of adivasis, asserting their claims to the forests and decent living, their independence and heroism. They laugh at those who look at them with pity and claim to 'hold their hand' and 'lift them up' to modern civilization by mainstreaming them or divide them by distributing among them the holy books of religion or turn them into objects of anthropological research, empathetic fiction or pure charity, often forgetting that they have their own history of struggle and endurance, and their own customs and ways of living and thinking, their own art and song and poetry. (*Lessons from Forest and Mountain*)

III

Pramod Kumar Jha has rightly observed that "Each of his poem is a record of the suffering of the forest dwellers exploited and misunderstood by the so called civilized people who never cared for their way of life, traditions, customs, religion or culture. People tried making laws suited to them, unilaterally snatched their land, forests, traditions, religion, faith, respect, values, and destabilized their whole existence" (Foreword 14-15). It clearly exhibits that a study of poems by Mahadev Toppo would throw light on the multifarious aspects of Adivasi philosophy manifested in their life style and value system. The most significant vision of Adivasi life is that they observe all the creations of the universe in totality which are interdependent on each other constituting the unified whole. Each part of the creation possesses equal importance for the functioning of the universe. Adivasi Philosophy as reflected in the poems of Mahadev Toppo can be observed through following ingredients:

- i) Collectiveness
- ii) Co-existence with nature and other creations
- iii) Consciousness for Cultural Heritage (beliefs, worship system, music and dance etc)
- iv) Struggle for Adivasi 'self'
- v) Voice against anthropocentrism, modernization and outer encroachment

Individualism has no space in Adivasi life. Community constitutes their existence which has no value beyond it. Happiness, miseries and protests all are seen in the context of community. Instead of "I", "we" has sole value among Adivasis. Mahadev Toppo's poem "Protest" explains this sensibility of collectiveness:

... we talk
 About house, land and earth
 Which we dug by our hands,
 Made and irrigated.
 That's why we oppose those forces
 Which stand against them. (131: 7-13)

In the life of Adivasis, it is field, house, land and earth which has important and which they fight for if eternal forces try to usurp.

Multifarious aspects of Nature such as trees, mountains, river etc are integral part of Adivasi life. These aspects of Nature dominate poetic world of an Adivasi poet which is witnessed from Mahadev Toppo's poem "A Poem". He explains aesthetic world of a poem created by imagination of a poet:

Yes! As a poet
 Saving forests, mountains, rivers,
 Trees and plants,
 I am shooting a film on the poetry
 From the camera of pen,
 From the rocky grammar of mountain
 From greenery of the greenish languages. (145: 12-18)

The industrialists and contractors offer mahua liquor to win favour of Adivasis against deforestation and mining. Adivasi poets are writing against this unhappy situations: When there is a conspiracy/ To drown in the bottle of Mahua liquor/ All the opposing voices of the forest/ Green trees of the forest / Their desires of growing freely/ With greenery and happiness/ On the Mountains and in the valleys/ Then,/ How would a poet of the forest remain silent? (155). The poet depicts his retaliation against such miserable situation:

He would lift up his bow
 And put his pen like arrow on its string,
 And he would certainly play Mandar and flute
 Along with it. (155: 10-13)

Equal weightage he gives to the other aspects of the Creation and instructs to take lessons from trees, mountains and other creations of the symmetry to overcome the current painful situations:

Keep your sleeping consciousness awakened
 Learn the art of life from Sal tree;
 Learn speed of moving ahead from rivers and waterfalls;
 Like Eklavya
 Maintain your willpower to prove yourself;
 And be ready
 For every dangerous situation
 Like a tiger cautious of every sound while going on a hunt,
 Or like a large eagle flying in the sky
 Identify fish swimming in the deep river;
 Fill this power at any cost in your body, heart and mind
 And keep on filling. (148-149: 116-126)

The poem, "I want Poem to Move around Jharkhand" addresses the objective of poems composed by Adivasi writers. Poems of non-adivasi poets do not deal with flora and fauna of Adivasi Areas. The poet observes:

Your poem
 Walks on the banks of Ganga or Yamuna
 Walks around Magadh, Allahabad, Delhi, Banaras, Bhopal, Jaipur
 Bhojpur, Avadh, Braj, Malwa—
 But it never comes
 To the mountains of Jharkhand,
 Full of thorny bushes.

If a non-Adivasi poet chooses Adivasi area for any reason, he does not move deeper to deal with their problems. His motif is political. The poet writes:

If it comes by mistake,
 It rides on a fast moving car,
 Wearing coloured goggles to save eyes from dust.
 Seeing us,
 It returns to Delhi.

That's why the poet feels need for composing poems about Jharkhand. Many main-stream scholars and critics blame Adivasi poets that their poems do not confirm to the poetics, so they are sub-standard. Mahadev Toppo does not feel inferiority complex after receiving such harsh comments; rather he accepts it positively and admits that he may not be able to compose a poem in very artistic manner but he is committed to write some lines similar to a poem. This is a lesson for the non-Adivasi and Adivasi writers both. Non-Adivasi writers should know that their game of superiority will not work to discourage Adivasi writers. Adivasi writers are determined to write about themselves in a language which they know. Adivasi writers should also feel encouraged with the commitment of Mahadev Toppo. They should not be influenced with what non-Adivasi say about them:

I want this poem
 To travel to the villages of Jharkhand.
 That's why I write poems
 In unrefined words.

His poem, "Company of Mandar" shed light on their cultural legacy and describes importance of Mandar in the life of Adivasis of Jharkhand. It seems that the poem hints at socio-religious dislocation of the tribes on the one hand and importance of cultural self on the other hand. Tribes of Jharkhand were the followers of Saran religious system which was much attacked by the intruders. To win the faith of Tribes, their rituals and religious belief system was misrepresented as sub-standard. The tradition of worshiping ancestors was criticised and they were categorized as the worshiper of ghost. Since beating of Mandar during the worship was a tradition, so they were suggested throw out the Mandar because it was an instrument of ghost as per the outsiders. Aggrieved by this approach of religious intruders, the poet in the very beginning of the poem explains the value of Mandar in the life of an Adivasi:

Hm! How can I leave Mandar anyway?
 Actually, you don't know that
 Every moment of life,
 Every beat of breathing,
 Every drop of tears,
 Each moment of love,
 Or each drop of sweat perspired from my body
 Working with spade in the field or ploughing,
 Whole wealth of the house filled with grains
 Is intrinsically tied with the beats of Mandar.

Modern Adivasi youths are culturally dislocated and removed from cultural identity. Some non-Adivasis claim that they know Adivasi culture which is retaliated by the writer who says that one cannot know Mandar until he dances in the festivals on the beats of Mandar. How Mandar is an instrument of inspiration, the poet describes:

Mandar is neither mere rhythm of music,
 Nor just a signal for backward and forward rising steps.
 Mandar is a sweet aroma of the earth
 Which emanates during the first rain;
 Mandar is a sensual fragrance of the Spring also;
 Mandar is protector of our granary also;
 Mandar is fire also which warms up the body during winter of *Agahan*¹¹;
 It is not mere an instrument of dancing happily.

What place and effect the Mandar has in the life of an Adivasi can be assessed with the following lines which explain that the Mandar soothes in the moment of sadness and is loved by its player as his co-wife. If it breaks, he feels so sad as his wife is dead.

In sad moments, Mandar shows affection;
 When it puts its hands of beats on the sad feelings
 Waves of pleasure like those of *Parab*¹⁴
 Flow in each vein.
 It is life; it is language; it is breathing; it is song;
 It is courage; it is dream; it is hope
 It is inspiration of struggle of ancestors;
 It is also a roar of resistance and disagreement;
 It is also a message of getting united;
 It is zeal of *Ulgulan*¹⁵ also;
 It is consciousness of remaining calm too.

Poet tells that Mandar is a culture and history of Adivasis but Non-Adivasis do not realize it. Life of Adivasis cannot be understood until one understands Mandar. He boldly announces that non-Adivasis may continue to call them uncivilized but they will not leave singing and dancing on the beats of Mandar:

we shall continue singing on the beats of Mandar,
 Songs of breaths of Earth,
 Songs of greenery of Earth,
 Songs of salvation of Narmada
 Koel, Karo, Damodar, Suvarnarekha.
 With pious flowers of *Sarai*
 With red flowers of Palash, vermillion on the forehead of the Earth
 With rhythmic and musical sound of rivers
 With cool and calm breezes of mountains
 We shall be singing again and again
 Songs of bringing sharpness in pen,
 Songs of empowering life,
 Songs of strengthening our villages, country and world—
 With Mandar.

Thus, the poet suffices Adivasi tradition, culture, rituals, and more life and soul of their values.

The contemporary situation is very antagonistic and apathetic to the Adivasis. They are displaced, humiliated, and tortured. Away from their cultural roots, educated Adivasi youths are hopeless and dejected with the prevailing situations created by civilized society in which they are harassed and insulted intentionally. They find the situation pathetic and invincible. To cope up with the situation, it is their own root which is only solution. In the poem “For the Son Travelling on Kalahandir Road to Join his Job”, the father suggests his son to take strength from the experiences of his life and his family.

If ever you feel dejected
 Remember the goals you hit
 In the final hockey match of your school days;
 Remember great art work of Vinayak;
 And struggle of elder brother Sandeep,
 Encouragement and support of brother Jaydeep;
 Remember anger, rebuke,
 And love of your mother. (148: 107-115)

In his poem, “Why do You Laugh at Us?” questions the attitude of the main stream society and explains the importance of traditional knowledge system and medicinal values of herbs popular among Adivasis. The poet tells the others not to make a fun of Adivasis because undoubtedly they wear less clothes, they are black skinned, they are less educated but they are far ahead the people of the main-stream in some aspects. They can tell the time by looking at the stars in the night and profess rain or climate change observing the behavior of ants and spiders:

Do you know that
 Phutkal¹ also is a medicine;
 Ranu² is used in herbal medicine also?

There are numerous such other herbs in the forest,
 Can you identify and recognize them
 By looking at their leaves,
 Or sniffing their roots?
 Looking at the stars at night, we can tell the time;
 Observing activities of ants and caterpillars
 We can foretell, when it will rain?
 Or when climate will change?
 We can save our live even in Tsunami
 As we saved ourselves in Andaman.
 Even your computers
 Could not predict whether change so accurately.

In his poem, "Transformation" he breaks the archetypal image of Adivasis and establishes their human identity. They are seen as groups with half-naked bodies living in the forests busy in playing their traditional musical instruments, dancing on some occasions such as republic day and hunting animals. Now-a-days they are challenging their romanticized images which has drawn various negative adjectives such as militants, terrorists, misled, and brainless for them. The poet sarcastically comments that they have developed one more weakness along with those attached to them by the main stream society:

They have started / To Think, / To Speak, / And to Demand.

The poem, "In Democracy" talks about the revolutionary spirit of Adivasis to fight for their rights. They are determined to fight for their bread, forest, land, language, space etc.

His poem, "In the Cell of Questions" acknowledges efforts of main-stream people such as P Sainath, Ramsharan Joshi, Verrier Elvin, Sharatchandra Rai, welfare societies run by religious communities, Medha Patekar, Ramanika Gupta, Arundhati Rai, and Brahmdev, Kumar Suresh Singh etc to develop plight of Adivasis. However, he finds no sign of development in the target community because they are still on the margins. The question asked in the end of the poem is very relevant:

But why are we helpless,
 Silent and boiling with anger
 Like 'Lahanya' of *Akrosh*
 Chopping the head of sisters even today?

The poet claims that this question has not been answered by the intellectuals and scholar till date and he hopes that this work would be done by Adivasis only. Adivasi life is still a mystery to the outside world.

The poem, "Have Changed Myself Somewhat like This" addresses the degenerated condition of Adivasis with the help of image of Sakhua tree which stand for the identity of Adivasi in Jharkhand.

We lived ever
 Like a tree of Sakhua¹
 Which dried
 If uprooted
 And planted somewhere else.

The poet claims that Adivasis have lost their “self” being swayed away in the glamour of modernity. Earlier they were like Sakhua tree which never survived if uprooted. Comparing Adivasis with Thethar he highlights their uprooted position. The image of Thethar reflects on the humiliated self of the Adivasis who have been displacement.

Now we grow anywhere and in any season
 Though not like a tree of Sakhua
 But like rigid, shameless plant of Thethar²
 Which needs only
 Some air,
 A small patch of earth,
 Little moisture,
 And some light.

“Jharkhand Mataining Rich Traditions of India” discusses transformation of Jharkhand at par with the other cities of India. Jharkhand, the capital has brought economical mobility in the life of some Adivasis undoubtedly but it has developed the situation of chaos and confusion also in Jharkhand. The following lines describe the situation of Adivasis in Jharkhand:

In this dilemma and confusion
 Some of them have held up guns instead of lathi,
 Some others pen in place of bow and arrow.
 Some have picked up camera in hands;
 Some others hoisted flag of revolution instead of hoe;
 Some have weighed politics in their own scales;

In the name of development non-Adivasis robbed Jharkhand of its natural wealth and spread pollution which the poet reflects in the following lines:

Some others have defiled water of Damodar;
 Some have stolen the yellow sand of Suvarnarekha;
 Some have mined coal from Jharia-Dhanbad²;
 And iron ore from Chiria Mines³ and Kiriburu⁴;
 Some have cut trees from the dense forest of Saranda⁵;
 Some ran away with Uranium from Jadugoda⁶

This development affected life and climate of the area. The poet describes that cool climate of Ranchi, peace of the village, dreams of youths, use and misuse of money, assault on Adivasis became general phenomena. Jharkhandi under the leadership of Sibu Soren and Leftist started working together but after

some time they worked separately and later right wing political parties established its hold over the state which the poet hints at in the line, “Someone stole green and red colours from the forest of *Shal* and *Palash*”. Formation of Jharkhand brought Adivasis in contact with non-Adivasis who came as servant in different sectors public and private. These non-Adivasis attracted them using money and other sources. Adivasi girls were taken to the cities for job and other works who were became prey to sexual assault. This situation gets expression in the lines: “Spread blue poison into the soft bodies of girls/Throwing them into the gulf of sex racket in cities.” The poet holds that Adivasis also are equally responsible for this situation in Jharkhand. He wrote: “We are doing the same/What is done with everything of ours in India./We are following the same rich traditions of country,/ Now in our Jharkhand.” But the poet does not want to be part of this experiment with Jharkhand and also pleasure of the game played the others. Rather he composes poems against this.

“From the Eyes of Mountain” expresses the poet’s anger for their mistreatment by the mainstream society. Since ages Adivasis have been given identity as “wild”, “forest dweller” “Adivasi” “Scheduled Tribe” by the main stream. The poet says that he would accept these nomenclatures and promise to keep silent at the publication of their naked photographs and articles written by them. He will accept that Adivasis are “Dalit, a Negro, a Black, or something else.” He would accept whatever is said about them by the mainstream but he wouldn’t accept them as human beings.

Rejection of status of human being of Main-stream people is actually denial of anthropocentrism which attributed superiority of humans over other creations of the universe. It is main stream lashed with modern sensibility which values lust for material wealth and luxury over other things. It does not mean that this instinct is absent in marginal streams. However, the main stream has taken it as its prerogative. The true Adivasi mean an Adivasi without infection of main-stream and modernity believes in aspiration for what is necessary to live life. Such attitude of rejecting human status to main stream is quite natural because, if a person is tortured, such expressions would definitely find passage wherever it will get space. Adivasi life is full of raw emotions which flow like breeze of air incessantly echoing like murmuring of water amidst silent forest.

Adivasis have great respect for their ancestors who are assumed to be present in the mortal world after their death. That’s why they worship their ancestors. The reason is that many things they owe to their ancestors as traditions, customs and beliefs. Concept of ‘Ritu’ and ‘Nad’ are present in Adivasi life and value system. It will be vain to search for it in the books and in other sources.

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Role of Translation in the Making of Indian Writing in English

GAURI SHANKAR JHA

Translation is, somehow, the rule of the day, for the simple reason is that it is enshrined in every step of our life: in our day today activities- be it the interaction with someone, or the introduction to a stranger, or love of some sort, or deep hatred towards anyone. All our feelings are exposed through our eyes, our smile, our volume of speech, precisely, through body languages that speaks volumes. So translation has become our life pattern; even our silence speaks aloud clear; an exercise as a natural process of decoding of the target text – often a lively termed as recreation.

Now- a – days, translation has been accepted as an independent genre and its studies has been able to occupy a separate space of its own with overwhelming identity leading to exhaustive academic research also, precisely, it has emerged as an academic discipline, introduced in almost all centers of Higher Education. However, my presentation, here, is confined to its role in the growth and development of Indian Writing in English.

As we know, the making of Indian Writing in English , is a phenomenal perspective, and whatever we have today , is nothing but the refined byproduct of various currents and cross currents, something voluntary and something verbal which crept into the texture unknowingly, unintentionally and unconsciously. In such a grand move, translation has played a substantial role and this paper intends to explore the same heath and to establish the much sought notion of its role in the shaping of Indian Writing in English . To me, translation is a complex process of decoding / deciphering, transfiguring and re-presenting – all in a different fashion, with a sincere and honest endeavor to keep the soul and the spirit of the text intact that remains in question, for all the time to come. Right from the inception of the Indian Writing in English we have abundance of instances that registers its enrichment through translation.

Let us try to trace its genesis, first. Frankly speaking, translation has been the primary mode of expression to reach any alien habitat and its inhabitants; it has evolved both as natural insistence and out of dire necessity. At every juncture, in the evolution of the mankind and maintenance of human relationship, it performs as a bridge between different cultures and civilizations, and a lot more. It is an exercise that began with the decoding of body language of man / woman and an urge of progression, even in day-to-day life. In the

early days, before the discovery of the language and script, body language was translated to know the implicit desire, as an infant learns by decoding the interactions of his family members and his surroundings. Our oral literature is the first instance of our verbal patterns of expressions that carries our feelings, imaginations and yearnings. With the progression of mankind, we started translating the happenings all around us, both natural and human habitation; at times, we agreed to their dictates whereas we preferred to challenge it, when it appears to be uncongenial and inhospitable. This attempt of translation is an attempt of reading and rereading, defining and redefining the age old linkage of man with Nature and to trace the intricate design of our culture and civilization.

The construction of the original texts and their authenticity, have been in question, right from the olden days, and it is true with Hindu religious scriptures, or that of the Buddhists and even the Christianity, and what we have as original texts are simply recorded by the scholars trying to translate the oral bits and pieces available over a long span of time as oral literature or that of the myths and legends. Adi Shankaracharya's *Brahma Sutras* (*Bhasya* based on the *Upanishads*), Buddha's sermons and the controversy of Theravadas and Mahayanists, and the creation of the *New Testament* after 200 years of crucifixion of Jesus are some of the controversial yielding of the Oral literature.

In case of Indian Writing in English, translation has been employed as a primary tool; let us call it a literary device, to reach the rest of the world and to introduce ourselves to the strange world of literature, that is, English literature. The translation of the Indian texts started much before Independence, initiated by the scholars and knowledgeable persons of the West, in a deliberate attempt to peep into our treasure of wisdom; initially, they focused on our Hindu religious scriptures such as the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Upanishads*, the *Purans*, the *Vedas*, and, of course, the *Bhagwad Gita*, to top it all. Subsequently, they shifted to the Buddhist literature, the Regional literature, and oral literature, that is, folk lore and tales.

Obviously, the entire lot of translation, available in the Indian Writing in English may be divided into four sections:

- 1 The translations of Indian Religious scriptures
2. The translations of Indian classics
3. The translations of literature written in regional languages
4. The translations of oral literature , that is, folk lore and tales which includes the treasure of myths and legends

During the British Imperial Period, the Britishers tried to translate the Hindu Religious scriptures for which they learnt Sanskrit; the mission of such projects was to have a thorough knowledge of Indian culture and civilization, our faith and belief, our prohibitions and inhibitions, this knowledge, in turn , would help them in better administration and governance. Here, we may cite

the name of Sir William Jones (1746-94), known as great Oriental scholar, who translated *Abhijanasakuntalam* of Kalidas; he admits that he learnt Sanskrit to have a better understanding of the Hindu Law, to control over the Pundits of the day who were engaged in irrational practices; his effort was culminated in the book of law, titled, *The Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Succession* (1798), with the final touch by H. T. Colebrook. At the same time, the knowledge of native language was made compulsory for obtaining a degree from the College at Fort Williams, Calcutta. This regulation of the year 1800, motivated the translation of Indian texts into English. On the other hand, the monumental exercise of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in translating the *Upanishads* was a major step of advancement.

At the same time, the Universities of the West (U.K., U. S. A., etc.) launched centers of Oriental Studies in their Educational Institutions which promoted bulk of translation. As a consequence, we have the translations of Indian classics, such as, Kalidas' *Meghdootam*, *Sacontala* (H. H. Wilson), *Songs of Jayadeva*, besides the translations of the Religious texts of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Purans* and the *Upanishads* – these two kinds of texts establishes the communion of Indian literary texts and Indian Religious texts.

Now, the platform for launching of the Indian Writing in English was ready. Towards the end of the second half of the nineteenth century, we can witness the rise of the Dutt family: M. N. Dutt rendering the *Mahabharata* into English and Romesh Chandra Dutt, busy in translation of the Indian classics in addition to the *Ramayana*. Then we have Mohini Chatterjee rendering the *Bhagwad Gita* into English. Surprisingly, Romesh Chandra Dutt opines that the *Ramayana* is like the *Odyssey* and the *Mahabhata* is like the *Iliad* of India.

We should not be surprised to learn that the first book of poetry that came out in 1825, by an Indian was a work of translation by C. V. Ramaswami of *Viswagunadarsana* of Arasanipala Venkatadhvarin of the early 17th century Sanskrit poem. Ramaswami has also translated some passages from *Vasu Charita* (a Telgu epic), in Heroic couplet, in his book *Biographical Sketches of Dekkan Poets*, originally written by Bhattu Murti, a 16th century poet. Subsequently, the phase of imitation was over, and now it was the period of assimilation and creation to authenticity. Toru Dutt's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) has an extensive use of Indian myths and legends, for instance, she talks of Savitri as a devoted wife, the doctrine of Karma, the illusion of Maya, the mystery of the role of fate in our life, the conviction of Prahlad, borrowed from (*Vishnu Puran*). She also dramatizes the perception of Laxman, Sravan, Dhruva, King Bharat, goddess Uma, etc. in her work – all reflection of her knowledge of Hindu Religious Scriptures.

Likewise, we can trace profuse borrowings from Hindu Religious Scriptures in the writings of Merwanji Malabari, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Man Mohan Ghosh, Sri Aurbindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Swami Vivekanand – all representing the period of Indian Renaissance.

In the field of Indian English Drama, Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated three of his own plays into English, written originally in Bengali, namely, *Ratnavali* (1858), *Sermista* (1859), and *Is this called Civilization* (1871). Sri Aurobindo's *Vasavadutta* is based on a story from *Kathasaritsagar*, whereas his epic poem *Savitri* is all based on the Hindu philosophy of life and death, and the pivotal role of love in conjugal life, borrowed from the *Mahabharata*. Plays of Rabindranath Tagore were translated from Bengali to English, for instance, his play *The Post Office* was translated by Devbratta Mukherjee, and *The King of Dark Chamber* was translated by K. C. Sen. Besides, Tagore himself translated his own plays. Such instances can be multiplied.

The bulk of translation was the direct result of the Oriental Policy of the Britishers to introduce British Education Policy in India. This was a sort of awakening to the intellectuals of the day which helped them to identify the ill practices prevalent in those days, and motivated them to eradicate them to have a rational society. Here comes Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a Reformer to abolish *Sati Pratha* and advocate for the propagation of English Education in India. However, Max Muller re-established the identity of Sanskrit, as that of Greek and Latin, and compelled the common Indian to revisit the old heritage of Ancient culture with the help of Sanskrit. In the subsequent phases, the literature of the regional languages attracted the attention and got translated; most remarkably, the Indian Govt. of those days took adequate initiative to encourage translations of the texts of regional languages; the founding of *Sahitya Akademi* in 1950 was a step towards it.

Further, Prof. Z. N. Patil opines that translation is a kind of cross cultural communication whereas Prof Chausheel Singh is of the view that translations are carried out intra culturally and contra culturally as historicity makes itself in different periodicities of time. So the primary objective of translation is communication, transmission and dissemination of the essence of culture, design of thought pattern and the nuances of the prevalent values. The writers of the Indian Writing in English are busy in establishing this fact, though they have been most often condemned as 'Arnold in Saree', etc. Now, the translators are transcreators, rather, taken as Creative Writers.

The Project undertaken by the early writers, as that of the Dutt family, Ghosh brothers, etc., come under the same preview and, naturally, under severe attack. Literary Historian K. R. S. Iyenger maintains that:

“———the magic of the original can easily be staled in translation———the two epics——challenge translation by their very simplicity of diction and also by their sheer massiveness ——the language marked by a radiant and crystalline self-sufficiency and simplicity —— many of the original descriptions and episodes had to go. The epic sweep is lost in consequence, and what we have is a series of extracts from the epic, but they are much less than almost other than, the original epic. (76-78).

About Romesh Chandra, he says:

“Romesh Chandra has retold the old stories in his own way, though on a small scale; that would have been a different matter altogether. He has been faithful to the originals after the fashion of his own, but that is not enough. The splendor, the amplitude, and the vast epic comprehension of the original are damaged beyond recognition — his two decisions — the drastic shortening of the poems and the adoption of the Locksley Hall (Tennyson), both are questionable decisions — much has been lost in the process — “ (77-78)

So is the case with other translators too. Even Tagore had to suffer these allegations because of the changes that he made while translating his own works. However, such endeavors opened the Pandora's Box of the East to the rest of the world. As a consequence, the translated texts had enormous impact in the shaping of the creative minds of the writers abroad, for instance, poets, like, Goethe, William Blake, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Walt Whitman, etc. The philosophers like Kant (Upanishads), Heidegger (Buddhism), Schlegel and Schiller brothers (Germany), and to top them all Max Muller, who was highly influenced by the Indian School of Thought and Philosophy, as registered by the translators; they are, otherwise, termed as Oriental Scholars or Indic Scholars, or European Idealists. Beginning with the works of Dutt family, till the present day, the translated texts have influenced the Western mind substantially, be it the writers of the British Romantic Period, the Victorians or the Moderns.

Coming to the most important aspect of the world of translation, the examination of the translated texts from the texts written in Regional languages need to be discussed. The exercise of translation was not confined to the Sanskrit texts only: religious or classical, rather it extended to the texts written in the less exposed regional languages or dialects, such as, Marathi, Bengali, Punjabi, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Tamil, Kannad, Konkani, etc., besides the major streams of Hindi and Urdu. It stimulated the common Indians to rise to the demands of the contemporary world, to promote the wise words of the creative minds and to discourage irrational superstitious ill practices.

The earliest translation of the text in the regional language is available in the early period of 16th century, when European Missionaries were inclined towards the Hindu text and Manuel D'Oliviera translated *Gyaneswari* from Marathi to Portugese. In 1793, W. Franklin translated a Braj text from the 18th century titled *The Loves of Camarupa and Camalata*. F. S. Grove translated a Punjabi poet Prannath in 1879. Above all, we have a journal titled *Indian Antiquity* in 1880 and 1890, which comprises the translation of folk tales of Punjab and the rest of India. Buddhist literature *Jatak* was translated from Pali by T. W. R. David and E. W. Cowell. In the twentieth century, the work of translation could occupy larger space with the advent of scholars like A. K. Ramanujan, Girish Karnad, etc. It is necessary to mention that after

Independence this activity got impetus and we have a good number of writers engaged in translating their works into English, for instance, O. V. Vijayan (Malyalam), Arun Kolatkar (Marathi), Vilas Sarang (Marathi), Girish Karnad (Kannad), etc. A.K. Ramanujan devoted his whole life in translating texts of Tamil and Kannad into English. Bengali literature mentions the name of Michael Madhusudan Dutt who translated his own plays from Bengali to English. So is the case with R. N. Tagore. Romesh Chandra Dutt translated his own novel 'The *Lake of Palms*' (1902). Vijay Tendulkar's plays originally written in Marathi, Badal Sircar's plays written in Bengali, Mohan Rakesh' plays written in Hindi, Amrita Pritam's writings in Punjabi (*Death of a City*), P. N. Naik's writings in Konkani, , Narned Dhasal's writings in Marathi (translated by Dilip Chitre), Rahi Masoom Raza's writings in Urdu and Hindi, (*Aadha Gaon*), Shantabai Kamble's autobiography in Marathi, (*Mazhya Jalmachi Chittarkatha*), Dharmvir Bharti's writings in Hindi, (*Andha Yug, Blind Age*, 1954), M. K. Kulburgi's plays in Kannad, (translated by Basavaraj Naikar), Shrilal Sukla's *Rag Durbar* in Hindi, Manjhan's *Madhumalti* in Awadhi, (a dialect), popular plays of North Karnataka *Sangya Balya* by Rayappa Patter (translated by Basvaraj Naikar), Veerapan Moiley's writings in Kannad, Kabir's *Dohas* in vernacular Hindi, (translated by Tagore), - all have been rendered into English and they have enriched Indian Writings in English.

We can also mention a few more names, for instance, Pradip Acharya, translating the work of Indira Goswami, from Assamese to English (*Pages Stained With Blood*), Bhism Sahni's *Tamas* translated by D. Rockwell, M. S. Chakravarty translating Arun Sarma's work *On a Wing and a Prayer* from Assamese, M. T. V. Nair translating from Malyalam the work by Gita Krishnamurty (*Naalukettu: The House Around the Courtyard*), Ashapura Debi's *The First Promise* translated by Indira Chowdhry from Bengala, *Sonam* of Y. D. Thongchi, translated by Mridula Barooah, *Zindginama* by Krishna Sobti, translated by Neel K. Mani from Hindi, *Those Days* of Sunil Gagopadhyaya, translated by Aruna Chakroverty from Bengali, *The Hour Before Dawn* by B. Saikia, translated by S. C. Maitreyee from Assamese, *The Gift of Cow (Godan)* of Premchand translated by G. C. Roadrmel, *Cuckold* by Kiran Nagakar, translated by the author himself from Marathi, *The Crooked Line* by Ismat Chughatai translated by Tahira Naqvi from Urdu, *Samskar* of Ananthmurthy translated by A. K. Ramanujan from Kannad, *Sangati* by Bama translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom, *Draupdi* of Mahasweta Devi translated by G. C. Spivak. Such instances can be multiplied further. Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas*, the *Bhagwad Gita* and countless texts have been translated into several languages of the world. We should not be surprised of the fact that a good many academicians are involved in translating the texts written in Regional languages to English.

Obviously, the major portion of Indian Writings in English, whether we talk of poems, novels, short stories, plays, travelogues, biographies, auto -

biographies or substantial essays are translated texts which includes the Religious Scriptures, Ancient Classics, myths and legends, borrowed from the treasure of our old heritage of oral and written texts, or the texts written in Regional languages of the land. In fact they constitute the identity of our culture and civilization and the country as a whole, and keeps it alive for the rest of the world, for all times to come. Hence the role of translation and translators cannot be undermined or underestimated, at any cost. It has propagated the message of peace along with wisdom of all sorts; and so, T. S. Eliot is compelled to articulate in the concluding section of *The Wasteland*:

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata/ Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

Finally, we may conclude by articulating that Indian Writings in English has been shaped by the works of translation to a great extent and we must be thankful to this genre of literature for its enrichment and prosperity.

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Rethinking Identity: A Modern Quest in the Novels of Shobha De

SANJAY KUMAR

The female protagonists in the novels of Shobha De are very remarkable as they are modern as well as glamorous too. The protagonists in De's novels try to their level best to rebuild their lost fortunes. They attempt hard to look glamorous by losing weight and spending money in massage parlours. They try to look and act differently from the conventional and traditional women. They love to fall in love with their looks by which they try to attract people. It gives them immense pleasure when people fall head to heels in love with them and they are slightly worried about it. Shobha De doesn't believe in describing her women characters as love slaves or mere partners at home. Shobha De as a writer tries to portray her feminist approach while depicting women in her novels. Women in her novels are represented as sexually liberated and free thinkers who have been termed as 'New Woman'. Heroines like Karuna, Aparna, Mikki, Alisha or Asha Rani, the novelists portrayed them as rebellious modern Indian women who challenge the patriarchy. One may find that her women are far more self-confident, dictatorial and bold in association to men. They are not subservient, and shamefaced of their undertakings. Sujata, in *Sultry Days* (1994), a prostitute does all those activities what her mind says. She gets pleasure in these activities of prostitution. The rebellion nature of De's heroine can be seen when Asha Rani, in *Starry Nights* (1991), famous heroine of Bollywood resolves to quit films all of a sudden while she is at the peak of her profession because she wanted to live with a fellow co-star, Akshay Arora. When her mother tries to check her from doing it, she argues in this way "Money, money, money. That's all you think of. Well, I'm fed up being your money machine. I've done enough for everybody- you, Sudha and others- now I want to live for myself. (106)

Besides it Asha Rani also projects herself a code of behavior which is free from the prescribed gender rules and sexual limitations. Through the portrayal of women characters, the novelist depicts a clear picture of her intentions. She insists that women in upper class society have no fear about public. The women in Shobha De's novels believe in Pleasure. Her novels disclose about such women who break the age old traditions of enjoying life with pre-marital affairs and extra-marital relationships.

Shobha De depicts women in their accurate colours. They are represented as what they actually are and not what they should have been. The new notion of pleasure visualizes whole sexual liberty which is accompanied by financial freedom; unrestrained passion is sought by Shobha De's women in the form of desire. As it is very clear that the social rules have always been harsh on women in India. It is reasonable that a man can have extra marital affairs. The society doesn't raise eye brows to those men who leave their wife at home and enjoy with either prostitutes or whores by paying them in cash or kind. No one bothers to think about the woman who is lonely in her home waiting for her husband who doesn't come nights after nights. What she would do in such situation? She can't take her life or ruin herself by crying. A woman is socially not complete without the existence of man in her life and it's debarred to enjoy any sexual liaison with any man other than her husband. Her desire for sexual relationship is subordinated to the interest of the society not on her individual feeling.

It is necessary to say that sex adds a lot in providing pleasure to the women in Shobha De's novels. The writer feels that sex should not be hated. She has spoken clearly about sex in the following way in *Snapshots* (1995): "Sex is no longer the most dreaded and despised three letter word in India, is enough to celebrate." (3)

One may say that in the urban world a modern woman attempts to do her best anything that comes to her mind, goes to any extent to derive preference of her own. The best example of it can be found in the novel *Starry Nights*, where the heartthrob of millions, queen of Bollywood, Asha Rani efforts to derive pleasure in destroying men and the most dreaded weapon that she uses is 'Bed'. Men are never able to forget her once she goes to bed with them. Her bed mates ranged from Kishenbhai, to Akshay Arora to Abhijit, to Jay to Jojo and she even got succeeded to seduce her father's friend in a plane. Sometimes men got afraid of her spell yet they couldn't struggle going to her for pleasure and once they went, they were trapped. Asha Rani loved to destroy them, According to her, bed can be considered as a battle field where the battle goes between two human bodies and it's a battle of intellectual ones.

Undoubtedly, Asha Rani won each time this battle. Men despised her yet had a craving for her. This battle field gave Asha Rani sensual pleasure and she loved it very much. She is compared to a gangster who is a very pretty woman in the battlefield which is considered to be the bed. Asha Rani's game strategy is that she would first of all judge her enemy's qualities and she had expertise in it. After that when she goes to bed with him, she uses all the tricks that would make him loose out to him and thus giving her all the pleasure in the world.

Asha Rani's source of enjoyment were men and the game she enjoyed playing is love making. It is clear that age was not at all a bar for love making. She had sexual encounters with men of his father's age and men who were

young enough to be her son like Amar who was a very young and promising star and in fact she had taken a liking for him instantly after meeting him for the first time when they were together for a movie. She had even recommended his name to the directors to cast him opposite her. To say that he was so desperate to continue with an incomplete scene of their movie in this way in *Starry Nights* (1991): "Look, remember, that scene in our movie- where the director cut to a bolt of lightning just when our lips were to meet? I'm like suffering from continuity problem. Could I.....that is... (29)

It was Amar who wished her on her birthday when she was thinking about Akshay as he didn't wish her at all. When he called her up and requested to come over and spend the night with her, she immediately agrees to his proposal and welcomes him by wearing a small and youthful T-shirt and tried to be seducing enough by tugging the neck of her costume off one shoulder. Finally they ended up with a sensual love making in her bed room. This has proved a point that the women in ShobhaDe's novels have made it very clear that they wish to enjoy their life like men without any interference.

Shobha De has tried to portray a man woman relationship which may be very serious yet they can give pleasure to the heroine at the same time. Not only this during the love making sometimes its men who ask them not to stop and deprive them of the pleasure It was Asha Rani who initiated the love making when she was with Akshay and she used various tricks to arouse him and give him pleasure which always culminated in sexual satisfaction and she succeeded in doing it always because after the love making process, Akshay was a contended man.

The traditional Indian woman tries to adjust her nature with her man but it's just the opposite with ShobhaDe's women. They are independent and free from social and moral restriction. Asha Rani knew that Akshay was married with two sons and was a family man yet she didn't think of sparing him from seducing him and the writer has left no stone unturned to depict the very warm and intimate love making scenes between Asha Rani and Akshay Arora.

Asha Rani found pleasure in the company of Akshay. She had cancelled all the shooting schedules to be with him on his birthday and they celebrated his birthday very sensually in his holiday inn.

The person she remembered most was on her birthday was Akshay Arora. Not only that, Asha Rani was so desperate about the physical intimacy with him that even the abuses by his wife, public insult didn't bother him. The only thing that mattered to her was Akshay and being in bed with him. She always waited for opportunity to win him back into her life. She finally got a chance in the monsoon when she was going for shooting and met Akshay in the traffic. He was persuaded and she succeeded and what followed next was a quiet love making in his Holiday inn in *Starry Nights* (1991) "Their love making was different. No biting, clawing or frenzied passion. Akshay was

gentle and unfrenzied. Asha Rani didn't feel much like a tigress herself. They hardly spoke." (102)

Shobha De's women characters are very frank about their expression of sexual desire by snubbing the sexual morality which is essentially ordained for women in the patriarchal system existing in India. Their reference to the sexual act in unambiguous terms shatters the traditional image of women that presents her as a submissive, docile, calm and meek.

The writer's bold expression regarding sex is clearly visible from the following lines of *Snapshots* (1995): "We don't dismiss it. We don't find it dirty. Sex doesn't threaten us. I'm not afraid to fuck. I feel sorry for all you women hanging on so desperately to outdated ideas of purity, morality, chastity. It's pathetic." (226)

Sisters (1992), is such a novel in which Shobha De has mentioned that women can make men, and give them what they want. For example in the following lines she has talked about the joy which a newly wedded wife should feel when she is with her husband: ".....His expertise and imagination were boundless as he excited her in a hundred different ways, touching, licking, nibbling, sucking..... he turned her over, he stood her up, he had her on all fours, and he even had her upside down with blood rushing in a gush into her head. It was unreal, pleasurable, but also a little frightening." (174)

Shobha De has stated that a woman can get pleasure even when she is surrendering to a man against her wishes. She enjoys with her protests like the following description in *Sisters* (1992): "Mikki didn't have time to do anything but savour the myriad physical sensations sweeping over her pliant body as she submitted to this man who was now her husband. There was no resistance left. And she was happy. And they had broken all the rules and every forbidden that she had ever known. She felt liberated, uninhibited and aroused to the point of primitive abandon." (175)

Now the time has arrived to conclude and in this regard we can say that the heroines of Shobha De are very thirsty for their identity. They have a modern quest for their individuality. They do all the things which are banned for women and they do it without any hesitation. Shobha De has explored imaginatively the varied world of women characters in her popular fiction. She emphasizes the quest for meaning of life, identity and unfulfilled emotional life of the characters through her novels. Being a woman De is more aware of the predicaments of women. She presents the vital reality and makes us aware of the miseries of women and injustices done to them by their counterparts in the patriarchal society. As a result, the women in her novels appear as life like human beings.

However, it is an important assertion that though De's novels such as *Starry Nights*, *Sultry Days*, *Snapshots* etc. are crowded with female characters, the analysis of the novels clearly indicates that her focus is only on the women

protagonists, and the other secondary female characters are simply mentioned. Furthermore, her novels move around only the metropolitan women whereas rural women do not find place in her novels. They are totally ignored. As a matter of fact, Shobha De restricts her characters to the urban area, ignoring the life of ordinary, illiterate rural Indian women. In this context, her remarks regarding the inspiration behind her novels are of considerable importance. For instance, she points out that her portrayal of fashionable life in *Socialite Evenings* is an accurate exposure of Mumbai “High Society” (330). Similarly, she says that her second novel *Starry Nights* “is the accumulation of countless images and memories gathered during my Stardust period” .

Shobha De is one of the famous feminist writers of the modern era. In her works one may get that there is a bold and frank depiction of fair sex and feminine attitude. Her novels can be termed as the ‘protest’ novels against the male-dominated Indian society where women are denied the freedom of expression and action according to their will and cherish and fulfil their own dreams. A woman, like man, is born to be free but in reality everywhere she is organized by many patriarchal norms and factors oppressing and vanquishing her in many ways.

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Phanishwar Nath Renu's Hindi Short Stories in Translation: An Appraisal

RAJENDRA KUMAR

Language is a socio-cultural phenomenon, and translation acts as a communicative device between the people of different languages. This device needs to be semantically and semiotically comprehensible otherwise it may cause misunderstanding. It provides a specific juncture at which multi-lingual people share the diversity of their socio-cultural values. When the people of two ancient civilizations had met like the ancient Indians and the ancient Greek, how dynamically would translation have played its role in cross-linguistic and intersemiotic exchanges? Translations between the languages of the world (such as, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabic, English and the like) have exemplified their truth. But, the translation of a literary text of a vernacular language into a standard one (Such as English, Hindi) may encounter the question of translatability and untranslatability. A target language (TL) text is said to be a secondary text, for it re-presents the essence of the idea and experiences recorded in the source language (SL) text. But, sometimes, the translator transcreates and transcends the original text as Edward Fitzgerald could do in *Rubbaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, the English translation of the Persian text.

The translation of *bhasha* literatures into a standard language confronts a serious challenge, for their linguistic and semantic equivalence is hard to discover in the standard language. Though *bhasha* literatures are confined to a particular linguistic group/region, they need to be brought to the global stage for their share in cultural heritage and linguistic richness with other language groups. According to the census of India of 2001, India has 122 major languages and 1599 other languages. In India, *bhasha* literatures that have been constitutionally recognized in the Eighth Schedule, have the advantage of connecting themselves with larger number of readers of different languages. And this is further worked by translations. For instance, in 2002, *Maithili* language was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which allowed it to be used in education, government and other official contexts. Now the *bhasha* literature in Maithili has been given a national status, and translators are more tempted towards its translation into other languages.

Phanishwar Nath Renu (1921-1977) happens to be the first Hindi/*bhasha* writer in India who is credited for the inception of *anchalik* (regional) writing

in this language. His first story, “Batbaba”, in 1945 and his first novel, *Maila Anchal*, in 1954 have been heralded as new writings in Hindi literature. After Premchand’s *Godan*, Renu’s *Maila Anchal* (*The Soiled Border*) is regarded as the most significant Hindi novel, for it proves to be a living record of the regional dialects, like *Maithili* and *Angika bhashas*, which are extensively spoken in the northeastern region of Bihar (especially in Purnia, Araria and Saharasa regions). Renu’s writing is an observatory where one can view and feel the locales, rural trends and customs in the hinterland of Bihar. He mixes standard Hindi with the flavour of vernaculars for narrating the ill-fated, poverty-stricken lives of the underdog and the illiterate rural folk of these areas. Although he was badly criticized in the beginning for branding these rural folk, he never paused painting them in local colours. These down-to-earth characters are so close to Renu’s heart that he has dedicated his first collection of stories, *Thumari* (1959), to them (“*tere liye – maine lakho ke bol sahe...*”: for you, I bore so much).

Renu has successfully transcended the cross-linguistic barriers of the vernaculars, thus recreating regional and rural realities evocatively. Besides, his stories have the snatches of *nirgun* verses (dedicatory songs to formless divinity), popular ballads and folk songs which are the cultural heritage of the place. In the stories, “Raspriya”, “Tisri Kasam” (“The Third Vow”), “Purani Kahani, Naya Paath” (“Old Story, New Moral”) and “Samwadiya” (“The Messenger”), we have some very beautiful verses in regional dialect.

1. “Sajanawa bairi ho gaye hamaro! Sajanawa ...!
Are, chithiya ho to sab koi banche...” (“Tisri Kasam”) (Renu, 2009, 117)
2. “Sajan re jhooth mat bolo, khuda ke paas jana hai. (“Tisri Kasam”) (Renu, 2009, 120)
3. “Naihar ko such sapan bhayo ab,
Desh piya ko doli chali...
Bhai royo mati, yahi karam ki gati...!” (“Samwadiya”) (Renu, 2009, 39)

These melodious pieces are romantic, transcendental and *sufi* in nature. In “Panchlight”, Gulri Kaki’s *Gosai* hymn (hymn to household deity) and *moolgan* (head singer) with his *kirtan mandali* (troupe of singers) chant religious verses for the Panchlight which becomes a joy-centric object for the village community. Godhan who was ostracized for singing lewd, filmy songs, proves his merit by lighting the Panchlight, and he is allowed to sing as many songs as he wished. In the story, “The Queen of Hearts” (“Lal Paan ki Begum”), Birju’s mother slaps Champiya for singing “*baje na muraliya*” (Renu, 139) [“*And the flute plays no more...*” (POS, 81)], but towards the end, she herself convinces Champiya to sing the very song.

There are probably four reasons to mention that Renu’s writing might encounter untranslatability. Firstly, the regional dialect abounds in such words

and idioms (*'sanjivani'*, *Gosai*, *'haveli'* *'dahi-chewra'*, *'Ram-Ram'*, etc.) bearing social, cultural and religious connotations that it becomes untranslatable into English. Secondly, the native music of the word is difficult to capture in English translation, i.e., the way the people of a particular region pronounce a word or articulate it in contorted fashion. In other words, they mispronounce it, such as, *daghdar babu* for 'doctor', *teeshun* for 'station', *baicaat* for boycott, *sarbay sittalminty* for 'Survey Settlement' and *malaitary* for 'military', *thether-baiscope* for 'theatre-bioscope', etc. Thirdly, Renu's stories are studded with fragments of popular ballads, folk song, *nirgun* verses and *kirtan* (hymns to divinity) that are untranslatable into English. Fourthly, the cultural and customary practices of these areas tend to remain untraceable in English language and cause a feeling of estrangement among the people of a non-native culture.

This paper intends to examine and illustrate the English translation of Renu's two short stories, "Panchlight" and "Lal Paan Ki Begum" ("The Queen of Hearts"), done by Rakhshanda Jalil in her book, *Panchlight and Other Stories* (2010). The book is a very modest attempt at translating the SL text into the TL text because its textual transference hardly renders lexical richness of a locale. The local feel for the earth often remains missing in the TL text. In Anton Popovic's term, it fails to produce the 'metatext', a text resulting from the development of "the semiotic, meaning-bearing, side of the original text." (Popović, 226) As said in the preceding paragraph, vernacular dialects and idioms may have few synonyms in English, but may fail to give exact English rendering. The translator also encounters the problem of exactitude. As a result, linguistic signs that bear the cultural and customary values of a specific region, need to be transliterated otherwise they may suffer animosity. Renu's translator, too, seems to have confronted these problems. Eugene A. Nida's 'formal equivalence' and Peter Newmark's 'transference' methods seem to be most applicable to study Renu's regional writing in English translation. 'Formal equivalence' method of translation advocates for the faithful reproduction of the form and content which may lead the TL reader to "understand as much as he can of the customs, manner of thought and means of expression" (Nida, 129) to the SL context. And, 'transference' method of translation stresses on giving "local colour" and keeping cultural names and concept (Newmark, 96).

"Panchlight" is a simple, humorous story of a caste-specific village community called the Mahto toli. Its panchayat members bought a petromax at Ramnawami fair "from the fines and penalties collected over the past fifteen months." (POS, 31) But this simple, light-emitting device proved a hard nut to crack, for nobody in the Mahto toli knew how to light the patromax which the villagers proudly called 'Panchlight'. This complication put the toli's honour at stake and it was on the verge of losing face. The villagers, who felt pride and honour for their pachayat members, began to doubt their prudence and common sense. However, Gulri Kaki's daughter Munri saved the situation by

whispering to Kaneli that Godhan could light the Panchlight. Incidentally, it was on the complaint of Gulri Kaki that Godhan had been ostracized by the panchayat members for singing lewd filmy songs and eyeing on Munri. But, for the toli's honour, the ban was lifted. Godhan lighted the Panchlight skillfully and won the hearts of all. This simple, evocative village narrative paints the rural folk in their state of ignorance which plays out a comic flaw in the drama of village life.

Another story, "The Queen of Hearts", is centred on the "homely joys" of a village family. It is a light-hearted story of Birju's mother, who had a haunting desire to go to see the dance on a bullock cart at Balrampur. It was the last day of the dance and the last chance, too, for her to fulfil her simple dream. Birju's father went to fetch a cart. But, nobody in the Koiri toli could provide the cart. As the time passed, Birju's mother was simmering with anger. Her only dream was losing ground. She spoke harshly to her old neighbor, Makhni Phua, on asking whether she would go to see the dance. She gave a good beating to her son, Birju, who was asking for sweet potato. She slapped her daughter, Champiya, for coming late from the grocer's shop and singing filmy song. She sank in despair and stopped all preparation for the fair. At last, Birju's father returned with a cart from the Maldahiya toli. No sooner did Birju's mother "look at the tender green shoots of paddy" (POS, 88) brought from their field than all her ill-will melted away. The family set out for their noble pastime and the queen of hearts really felt delighted.

Thus, these two stories in Hindi reflect the mark of Renu's typical style of writing. For example, he uses pauses between clauses and sentences and tags the phrases to the mainstream sentence. There is *Angika Bhasa* accent in his characters' pronouncing English words, such as Panchlight as 'Panchlat', pump as 'pumpoo', cinema as 'salima', 'kerosene' as 'kirasana', a hundred rupee note as 'namary lote'. Besides, the use of idioms, metaphors and proverbs popularly rooted in the region, the snatches of folk songs, the feel of emotive situations, their cultural values in local colours – these and many other salient features are noticeable. Rakhshanda Jalil has somehow succeeded in reproducing these features in the translation. Anton Popovic has termed this feature as 'metacommunication' in the interlanguage activity (Popovic 226). The title 'Panchlight' is a compounding of Hindi and English (panchayat and petromax), a 'metatext' paradigm forming 'metacommunication' between the two.

"Panchlight" and "The Queen of Hearts" in English translation convey the narratives in simple, lucid way. However, the difficulty of the translator in finding exact equivalent words is also discernible. The regional / Hindi words, *sabhachatti* (congregation), '*jajim*' (white sheet of cloth), '*puja*' (worship), '*chhadidar*' (orderly), '*panchayat*' (village governing body), '*tolis*' (locality of a village community), '*moolgan*' (the head of the troupe of singers), '*kirtan*' (hymns in praise of God), '*hukka*' (earthen pot for smoking), '*gudgudi*' (*hukka* producing

gurgling sound), *chhoagur* (molasses), *hathchhuta* (he who is habitual of slapping/charging), *chukkimukki* (sitting posture with folded hands and knees), to mention a few, do not have lexical equivalence in English. Likewise, the words having onomatopoeic expressions – ‘*sann-sann*’ (whistling / swishing sound), ‘*tunur-tunur*’ (ringing sound of the bell), ‘*jhunur-jhunur*’ (jingling sound of the bell), *bhakk-bhakk* (prominent light) – have no ‘formal equivalence’ as Nida said or ‘transference’ as Newmark said in English. These linguistic signs connoting cultural and regional values need to be either transliterated or sought out some semantic equivalence. There are also words, like *sabhachatti*, *Gosai*, *Mahaveer Swami*, *malsi*, which are missing in English translation. *Chhadidar* has been modified into ‘orderly’. *Kanna-rohat* in “The Queen of Hearts” is translated as “the sound of someone crying” (POS 92). In fact, it could be a collective sound of weeping agonizingly.

The *Angika* dialect abounds with such local diction as gives situational and tonal feel in Hindi. They need to be substituted with English diction so that lexical and semantic equivalence may act as a balance. India is a country where rich cultural and customary values, religious practices and salutary formalities and courtesies are parts of life. These features are well traceable in the regional dialect. For instance, the words in the Hindi version of “Panchlight”, like *name-tame* (ritual practices), *punyah* (auspicious beginning), *dhur-khel* (cheating/cunning), *hukka-pani* (social mix-up), *kal-kabja* (a mechanical object with nuts and bolt), can hardly be communicated in English version with equal effect, for such socio-cultural set-up is not found in the English speaking world. Similarly, the Hindi version of “Lal Paan Ki Begum” (“The Queen of Hearts”) has ‘*Baisakh*’ (second month in the Hindu calendar), ‘*bighas*’ (measurement of land), ‘*mann*’ (unit of weighing), *name-dharam* (practicing of one’s religiosity), ‘*navvaan*’ (new grain), ‘*Agahan*’ (ninth month in the Hindu calendar), and ‘*mang tikka*’ (ornament at the parting of the hair) are untranslatable in English. These words, phrases and idioms cannot find linguistic equivalence in English diction.

English is an international language and when *bhasha* literatures are translated into it, the regional literatures gain a national as well as transnational identity. The regional dialect is revealed to the larger part of the world. A translator’s job, here, is of a conscious messenger connecting the hitherto localized literature to the current trend of writing. He is an efficient mediator in both, the SL and the TL. As a translator, Rakhshanda Jalil succeeds well in narrating Renu’s short stories in English and transliterating wherever linguistic situation of a locale requires. But, as a transcreator, she fails to reveal the regional tone and texture of regional Hindi words, to give the feel of Renu’s voice. “Panchlight” and “Lal Paan Ki Begum” are most often remembered for the ‘homely joys’ of the down-to-earth village folk who do not entertain high dream and over-vaulting ambition in their lives. When some theoretical tools

are applied to study them in English translation, they enrich our textual comprehensibility at semiotic, semantic, syntactic and cross-cultural levels.

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A Peep into Virgin Landscape of Indian Social Reality in the Plays of Mahesh Dattani

KAVITA KAMAL

Mahesh Dattani is a playwright who has set goal to expose hidden realities and suppressed desires of human beings living in Indian society. In other words, he draws curtain of being civilized to uncover what is behind it and has not been accepted as Indian. There are various feelings, sentiments and desires which are denied due to the hypocritical and oppressive social codes. Homosexuality, lesbian desires, love for eunuchs, extra marital relationships, incestuous relationship, craving for male child, and evils of patriarchy on males are very much Indian and are present in India but hypocrites do not accept it as Indian under the veil of morality. He says that “I am certain that my plays are true reflection of my time, place and socio-economic background . . . in a country that has a myriad of challenges to face politically socially, artistically and culturally” (CP xv). Santosh Kumar Sonker has observed about the issues under the social carpet which Dattani uncovers:

Mahesh Dattani has relentlessly shed light on the gritty realities of the society which is a hub of such issues which are quite noticeable but generally brushed aside under the carpet of civilization. There are certain hush-hush issues in almost every Indian family which, when leak out and come to the notice of others, become insufferably embarrassing. (4)

Mahesh Dattani has talked about in while conversing with Erin B.Mee:

You can talk about feminism, because in a way that is accepted. But you cannot talk about gay issues because that's not Indian, it doesn't happen here. You can talk about a middle class wife fantasizing about having sex with the cook or actually having a sex life that is not Indian either—that's confrontational even if it is Indian. (22)

The objective of the paper is to examine the depiction of such issues, which are not openly discussed in the present Indian society, in the plays of Mahesh Dattani.

Mahesh Dattani's first play *Where There's a Will* (1988) deals with the evils of patriarchy on males and females both. Till present it is a common feeling that only females suffer because of patriarchal norms but Dattani in his play *Where There's a Will* has depicted that patriarchy is equally harmful for males as well. Parallel to it he depicts the power of money depicting multiple sets of female characters. He does not depict women as weak characters which Indian

social system assumes them to be, rather he depicts them as normal human beings with true human nature. If Sonal is a traditional woman, Preeti is a new woman. Sonal, wife of Hasmukh Mehta, takes care of her husband as a true Indian woman but he is not satisfied with her because she is not smart and is good for nothing for him. He mocks at marriage as a social institution: "I think the important reason anyone should marry at all is to get a son. Why is it so important to get a son? ... A son should make me happy, Like I made my father" (CP 475). As a patriarch, he wants to enjoy body of women and keeps a mistress, Kiran working in his office. Contrary to Sonal is Preeti who is daughter-in-law of Hasmukh and wife of Ajit. Preeti shares modern sensibility and wants to enjoy money which she feels is not possible until Hasmukh is alive because he has complete hold on business which he has established and money which he has earned. His son Ajit also is useless for him because he does not follow in the footsteps of his father. He expresses his agony: "I don't think he has ever listened to me in his entire life" (CP 455). Frustrated at his son's behaviour, he communicated his anger: "What makes it worse is knowing that I actually prayed to get him. Oh God! I regret it all. Please let him just drop dead. Just turn him into a nice vegetable so he won't be in my way. Ever since he entered my factory, he has been in my way" (CP 455). He neither allows Ajit nor gives him freedom to grow as an individual because he wants to regulate his son's life as a patriarch and wants to fulfill his unaccomplished desires through him. He treats him as a fool without any business skill and as a loafer. He is well aware of cunningness of his daughter-in-law, Preeti. To have strong hold over his family even after his death, he prepares a Will and empowers Kiran Javeri with power of attorney which he keeps secret. As per Will, Kiran Jhaveri is nominee but she cannot spend money while his family members will get money only through Kiran Jhaveri. Preeti replaces blood pressure pill of Hasmukh Mehta with other medicine to remove him from the path of money but her scheme falls vain when Will is read out by the counsel. To reveal the reaction of Hasmukh, Dattani has used technique of ghost. After his death, Hasmukh remains present on the stage as the ghost and gives his reaction on the family tension over the issue of the Will. But his scheme of controlling the family members even after death does not pan out when an understanding develops among his family members and his mistress. He hangs himself upside down in the tamarind tree when his design. As the empire of patriarchy demolishes, the tamarind tree is chopped off. Undoubtedly female characters suffer because of patriarchy but Ajit also is victim of it. Female characters get adequate and due space in the play. Sonal, Preeti and Kiran all share their experiences and realize that they have been exploited by male chauvinist Hasmukh Mehta.

His play *Dance Like a Man*, which is autobiographical in nature, reveals another taboo about dance as a passion and profession. In Indian social system,

learning Bharat Natyam or any other dance is deemed to be fit for women. If a man has passion for Bharat Natyam, how society receives him has been depicted through the character Amritlal Parekh. Like *Where There's a Will*, this play also gives ample space to female protagonist, Ratna. Amritlal is another Hasmukh who does not want his son Jairaj to learn Bharat Natyam and to make a career in the profession of dance. Jairaj is stronger than Ajit of *Where There's a Will* because he leaves his father's home to accomplish his passion. But patriarch Amritlal makes a plot and shakes his hand with his daughter-in-law, Ratna. He gives Ratna a complete freedom to excel in dance with condition that she will end Jairaj's future as a dancer. Ratna agrees to this proposal and gradually destroys skills of dance in Jairaj and acquires a good name as a Bharat Natyam dancer. She promotes her daughter also in the same profession. She is so swayed by the charm of dance that she leaves her son on her maid who gives doses of opium to the son so that she can enjoy rest which results in dire consequence. One day the dose of opium become high and the son dies. It frustrates Jairaj much and he breaks his silence. The play has a metaphysical ending. Jairaj, who fails to achieve his passion as a Bharat Natyam dancer, dances with Ratna when they leave this world for heavenly abode.

His third play, *Tara*, sheds light on the harsh reality of Indian society in which a male child is preferred to a female child. The game is not limited to the preference of male child which is very common in the Indian society, it goes beyond it and exposes scheme of preference of the male child's life to the female child's, that too by the mother. The play deals with the life of a rare Siamese twins, Chandan and Tara, who are conjoined below pelvic area and have three legs only. Surgeon suggests that the third leg will survive on the body of the girl child. Bharati, the mother shows her inclination to give third leg to the male child which doctor denies with argument that the third leg has less possibility of survival on the male child's body. Ignoring the doctor's suggestion, the mother uses power of her father and bribes the doctor with the land in the prime location of the city to get her desire. In the greed of material wealth, the doctor commits crime of attaching the third leg to the body of the male child. For the time being, the mother becomes happy with achievement of injustice with her own daughter but with the passage of time her victory turns into a curse for both children and causes family tension. The third leg does not survive on the body of Chandan and both children become crippled for whole life. The play lays bare the mother's discriminated love for her own children. If a father does this act, he is termed as a patriarch but what adjective a woman should be given for misdeed which Chandan's mother commits? Because of the mother's preference to male child, both the children have to suffer curse of being crippled in the society. When this mystery is laid bare before children, they are aggrieved psychologically too. Mr Patel uncovers truth to children:

A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl ... The chances were slightly better that the leg would survive on the girl. Your grandfather and you mother had a private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. I was not asked to come...I could not believe what she told me – that they would risk giving both legs to the boy. (CP 378)

His next play *Final Solutions* (1993) deals with communal problem Indian society is beset with. It is a commissioned play written on the aftermath of demolition of Babri Masjid. The play very sensitively depicts issue of communalism and suggest love and respect for each other's religion as a solution to the problem. The play is set in Gandhi family which consists of Hardika, the elderly survivor of the partition of India and Pakistan, who was earlier known as Daksha, her son Ramnik, her daughter in-law, Aruna and her granddaughter Smita. Bobby and Javed take a hide in a thehouse of Ramnik to save themselves from a Hindu mob who identifies them as Muslims after searching a cap into their pockets during Hindu-Muslim riot. Against the resistance of Hardika, Ramnik protects Javed and Bobby from the Hindu fundamentalists. Ramnik is a secular Hindu and adopts a sympathetic approach to the Muslim boys just because of his hidden past i.e. the shop he runs was usurped by his father from the father of Zarin deceitfully during the time of partition. The rationale behind objection of Hardika to give shelter to Muslims is her bitter past which is reveal through the character of Daksha who faced the destruction of partition. Aruna, wife of Ramnik does not feel comfort with the presence of Muslim boys in her house who pollutes her house by using her utensils to drink water. Smita also is not comfortable in this situation just because earlier she was in love with Bobby which she decided not to continue. Later on Bobby is engaged to Javed's sister and her friend Tasneem. She finds her mother "stifling" her into religious practices. Bobby is a secular Muslim but Javed is a religious fundamentalist. After an incident in his life, he turned into an insurgent and worked as a hired hooligan. Talking in the house of Ramnik, he asserts that it is he who disrupted the Rath Yatra. The whole night in the house of Ramnik is full of tension. In the morning Bobby enters Pooja room of Aruna and touches statue of her God which flares Aruna up to the highest level. Bobby justifies his act with argument that he touched the statue to show her that his touch does not make any difference to the God and also is not adversely affected. He states that there is a need of mutual understanding between Hindus and Muslims and also proposes that if she is willing to accept them, he is ready to forget what happened to them during partition. Ramnik revelation about the misdeed of his father with Zarin's family throws her into utter shock and she understand why her family asked her not to visit Zarin's house. Thus, the paly suggests that the only is solution is to live and let the others live.

His play *Thirty Days in September* portrays incestuous relationship and its effects on the psyche of its victim and family. Mala is molested by her uncle in her infancy. It fractured her psyche which makes her sexually addict and she

does not find comfortable to accept marriage proposal. Her mother tries a lot to heal her mental agony but she hates her mother because she could not find relief from her mother whenever she went to her with pain of being molested; rather she was stuffed with eatable so that she could not cry. Mala reveals her hatred against her mother: "The only person who can, who could have prevented all this is my mother. Sometimes I wish she would just tell me to stop. She could have prevented a lot from happening . . ." (CP II 18). She is much upset with betrayal in personal relationships that she has no trust in her own mother. When her mother attempts to counsel her, she puts forth a quest which silences her mother:

Where were you when he locked the door to your bed room while I was snapping in there? Where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul? Fifteen minutes every day of my summer holidays, add them up. Fifteen minutes multiplied by thirty or thirty-one or whatever. That's how long or how little it took for you to send me to hell for the rest of my life! (CP II 53)

Her mother seeks refuge in diverting the discussion but Mala does not allow her. She forces her mother to give answer to her question:

I am not talking about a bad dream! I am talking about the time when uncle Vinay would molest me. When I was seven. Then eight. Nine. Ten. Every vacation when we went to visit him or when he came to stay with us. You were busy in either the pooja room or the kitchen. I would go to papa and cry. Before I could even tell him why I was crying he would tell me to go to you. (CP II 25-26)

Mala's hatred evaporates into tears when she listens to her mother's pain of same experience which she kept dark:

I was six, Mala. I was six. And he was thirteen . . . and it wasn't only summer holidays. For ten years! For ten years!! (Pointing to the picture of God.) I looked to Him. I didn't feel anything. I didn't feel pain, I didn't feel pleasure. I lost myself in Him. He helped me. He helped me. By taking away all feelings. No pain no pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. Shanti. But my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off somewhere. I didn't use it, no. I cannot shout for help, I cannot say words of comfort, I cannot even speak about it. No, I can't. I am dumb. (CP II 55)

Talking about problem of victims of incestuous relationships, Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri observes: "Child sexual abuse spans a range of problems, but it is this complicity of the family through silence and a lack of protest that is the ultimate betrayal for the abused" (73).

In his play, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, the playwright portrays the issue of homosexuality which has gained legal status in India recently. It lays open the hypocrisies of social life where 'male' and 'female' are the only sexual categories and where heterosexuality is the only accepted form of sexuality. As Jhon MacRae points out: "A play about how society creates patterns of

behaviour and how easy it is for individuals to fall victims to the expectations society creates" (45). Dealing with this unaccepted reality of Indian society, Dattani tries to state that all cultural codes and social structures have not been able to recognize homosexuality which is a different way of realizing the 'self'. One's sexual desires and forms of its realization is no less than one's social desires and its recognition. Commencing the play with the assumption that homosexuality is an indispensable (although still invisible) reality of the Indian milieu for centuries, Dattani works out the problematic identity of the gay man who is psychologically forced to suspect his own reality. Kamlesh's visits to a 'straight homophobic psychiatrist' to overcome his depression seems to help, until he realizes he would never be happy as a gay man. He accepts that it is impossible to change the society but it may be possible for him to reorient himself. Dattani interrogates this very social pressure upon individuals to fit into the set roles in order to be accepted by the society. The play exposes the hypocrisy with which the identities of the homosexuals are concealed so that the norms of gender construction are not put under the scanner. Bunny, a closet homosexual, suggests, "Camouflage! Even animal do it. Blend with the surrounding. They can't 'find' you. You politically correct gays deny yourself the basic animal instinct of camouflage" (70). This dialogue unveils the inadequacy of the accepted gender norms which deny the 'individual' even the very basic and personal right to choose his/her sexuality. Asha Kuthari Chaudhri observes: "Dattani seems to be pointing at the common spaces between feminism and gay liberation where both situate familiar oppressiveness in the 'straight' male and his assertion of phallogocentric 'normal pre-eminence the self-delusion of their creed" (52).

His play, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, strips of the false pride of elite class and agony of eunuchs in Indian society dealing with marriage between a eunuch and the son of a Minister. Simultaneously the play uncovers corruption in the police administration and oppressed situation of educated elite upper caste women. Subbu, Son of the Minister, loves a eunuch named Kamala and marries her against the desire of his father. To save his social prestige, the Minister, Mr. Sharma, gets Kamala killed and the other eunuch is accused of the murder of Kamala. Uma, wife of Suresh, Senior Superintendent of Police and daughter-in-law of Deputy Commissioner of Police, visits the record cell of SP office to search for the sources of her research on gender relations and comes across the file of Kamala. Against the patriarchal notion of Suresh and his rudeness towards eunuchs, she decides to visit the cell of Anarkali to uncover the truth of Kamala's murder, who promises to tell if she is released from the jail. Uma, wife of a SSP and the daughter of Vice-chancellor, Bangalore University has to borrow money from her father in the name of giving gift of the Minister's son so that she can bribe for Anarkali's release. Her helplessness and isolation in the family, perhaps, is the cause of her sympathy with the eunuchs. Though she is highly educated, and an elite, yet, she is subjugated in the family. Jeremy Mortimer

also opines: “Mahesh’s playsoften feature characters who are questioning their identity, and who feel isolated in some way. Umacertainly feels isolated in her marriage, and this sense of isolation makes her empathize with Anarkali, the hijara she befriends” (Note on the play 4). She does not bear child for which she is taken to the doctor who finds Uma physically fit to conceive child but Suresh does not go for medical checkup due to his male libido. After a long struggle, in the birthday party of Subbu where Champa and Anarkali go for dance and show Subbu the photo of Kamala which takes him in the grip of memory of Kamala, Uma comes to know about the real story. The mystery about the murder of Kamala is demystified when Subbu, after coming to know about real murder of Kamala, shoots himself from the revolver of Suresh. This murder is reported as the accident and the case is hushed up. Thus the play digs out discriminatory and humiliating approach of descent class towards eunuchs who wants to love and live in the society respectfully as the creation of God.

Thus, the plays of the Mahesh Dattani are the mirrors up the hidden image of the society delving deep into the multifarious facades layer by layers such as concern for fair sex and voice to the pain of homosexuals etc. which have been “virgin landscape” to use the term of Prof. Gauri Shankar Jha (195), until he penned down in his plays.

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Glimpses of Patriarchal Hierarchy and Women Empowerment in Girish Karnad's *Naga-Mandala*

DEEPAK KUMAR SONKAR

Naga-Mandala, as Karnad writes in his Preface, “is based on two oral tales from Karnataka which I first heard several years ago from Professor A. K. Ramanujan.” (1) The sub-title, ‘*Play with a Cobra*’, is indicative of its theme and significance of the role of Cobra in the play. The play is a powerful “portrait of the agony and anguish faced by both men and women in their development into adult roles and social adjustment in a society where the individual is given little space for self development, awareness and independence as a being.” (2) Appanna always keeps his wife, Rani, locked within four walls and does not permit her even to talk and smile with anyone. Somehow King Cobra, that is considered to be closely associated with the mythical Lord Shiva who is great to allow anything to his devotees and worshippers, appears for her rescue, relief and recreation. Rani’s mental agony ends at the moment when she comes in contact with Naga. M. Sarat Basu opines “Mandala is a thematic concept indicating inner concentration, a source of energy, *Naga-Mandala* is a magico-religious ritual involving Naga, the snake-god of the Hindus, who grants the wishes of the devotees, especially the wish of fertility. In the play, Naga grants Rani all her wishes which she does not express openly. She grows mentally and becomes a confident lady. She is cured of her frigidity. She gets a devoted husband. Her husband’s concubine becomes a life-long servant-maid for her. And she begets a good son. Naga, in addition, makes Appanna’s heart fertile with love and affection for his wife. At a higher level of symbolism, Naga represents a cultural leader who is instrumental in bringing about a socio-cultural reform.” (3)

The play beautifully begins with a “Prologue” presented by Man, Flames and Story, the characters that prominently figures in the story of *Naga-Mandala*. As Act I opens with Story’s introducing Rani:

A young girl. Her name...it doesn't matter. But she was an only daughter, so her parents called her Rani. Queen. Queen of the whole wide world. Queen of the long tresses. For when her hair was tied up in a knot, it was as though a black King Cobra lay curled on the nape of her neck, coil upon glistening coil. When it hung loose, the tresses flowed, a torrent of black, along her young limbs, and got entangled in her silver anklets. (4)

Rani is married to an adulterous youth who is rich but his parents are dead. His name is Appanna (which means ‘any man’). He takes her to his village. The very first dialogue between them expresses the future of Rani:

Appanna: Have we brought in all the bundles?

Rani: Yes.

Appanna: Well, then, I’ll be back tomorrow at noon. Keep my lunch ready. I shall eat and go. (5)

“Rani looks at him nonplussed. He pays no attention to her, goes out, shuts the door, locks it from the outside and goes away. She runs to the door, pushes it, finds it locked, peers out of the barred window. He is gone.” (6) The same thing happens to her every day. He enjoys his life in the arms of his concubine, while Rani has to remain locked all alone within the four walls. Somehow Kurudavva (which means ‘the blind one’), an old woman, discovers the presence of Rani in the locked room. She has sympathy for her and gives her a piece of root which she had received from a mendicant when she herself was young and unmarried. Kurudavva provides it to Rani, saying:

Take this smaller piece. That should do for a pretty jasmine like you. Take it! Grind it into a nice paste and feed it to your husband. And watch the results. Once he smells you he won’t go sniffing after that bitch. He will make you a wife instantly. (7)

Kurudavva had received from the mendicant three pieces of the root. The middle-sized root she used on a distant relative. She explains its effects:

One day a boy distantly related to me came to our village and stayed with us. The day I ground one of the pieces into paste, mixed it in with the food, and served him...He finished his meal, gave me one look and fell in love. Married me within the next two days. Never went back to his village. It took the plague to detach him from me. (8)

Kurudavva takes Rani’s problem seriously and offers to her the bigger piece saying, “Feed him the largest piece.” (9)

Rani follows her advice and instructions and prepares the paste of this magical root and pours it into the curry which instantly turns red, blood red. Being afraid of the consequences of this “horrible mess” she thinks, “Suppose something happens to my husband? What will my fate be? That little piece made him ill. Who knows...?” (10) Now Rani is married about this and thinks how to get rid of this horrible mixture. She is advised by Story (a character) – “Rani, put it in that ant-hill,” (11) she goes to the ant-hill and pours the liquid into it. Doing so, “the moment she turns her back to the ant-hill, a King Cobra lifts its hood, hissing, out of the ant-hill. Looks around. It sees Rani and follows her at a distance.” (12) When she reaches her house, Naga remains behind a nearby tree. As soon as Rani steps in the front door, Appanna slaps

her hard. She fell down the floor. Without paying attention to her again, he locks the door from outside and goes away. The King Cobra behind the tree, is witness to all this hissing, excited, restless. It falls dark. Rani goes to her bed. The Cobra enters the house through the drain in the bathroom and takes the form of Appanna (to distinguish this Appanna from the real one the dramatist calls him Naga, meaning a Cobra) and watches Rani lying in her bed.

This conversion of Naga (Appanna) into Cobra reminds us of Satan becoming a snake in the Christian mythology. But the difference between the two is that the mythical Satan gets transformed into a snake with the ill intention of misguiding Eve, the mother of mankind, while in Naga-Mandala, the change of self is out of love and affection for Rani. The King Cobra wants to give her all happiness and fulfil her every desire. However, all the events happen under the magical influence of the root given to Rani by Kurudavva.

King Cobra takes the shape of Naga (Appanna) every night, enter Rani's bedroom, enjoys her sweet company and physical beauty, and disappears through the bathroom drain before dawn every day. The snake-lover's magical visits in the form of the husband forces her to think why Appanna is so nice and gentle at night and rude and tyrannical during the day. She asks Naga, "You talk so nicely at night. But during the day I only have to open my mouth and you hiss like a...stupid snake." (13) These nightly meetings of Rani and Naga make her pregnant. "There is a baby in my womb...we are going to have a baby." (14) She carries on saying, "You are not happy about the baby. You are not proud that I am going to be a mother. Sometimes you are so cold-blooded – you cannot be human." (15) Naga replies her, "I am glad you hid the news from me all this time. Even now, try to keep from speaking about it as long as possible. Keep it a secret." (16) But it remains a secret only until the lights change from night to morning and Naga to Appanna. While seeing Rani's swollen belly, Appanna pushes her to the floor and kicks her, saying, "Aren't you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? I locked you in, and yet you managed to find a lover! Tell me who it is. Who did you go to with your *sari* off? (17) Being unknown to the transformation of King Cobra into Naga (Appanna), Rani tells him, "I swear to you I haven't done anything wrong!" (18) Appanna reacts to it thus:

You haven't? And yet you have a bloated tummy. Just pumped air into it, did you? And you think I'll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole village, you darken my face, you slut! (19)

He begins to beat her and says, "I swear to you I am not my father's son, if I don't abort that bastard! Smash it into dust! Right now." (20) He drags her into the street, picks up a huge stone to throw on her stomach. At the very moment, King Cobra moves forward, hissing loudly, drawing attention to itself. Seeing the Naga's presence, Rani screams and Appanna throws the stone

at it which instantly withdraws. Rani immediately flees to the house and locks it from within. Thus King Cobra saves both lives – Rani and her baby in the womb. Banging on the door, Appanna carries on shouting:

Open the door! Open the door, you whore! All right then, I'll show you. I'll go to the Village Elders. If they don't throw that child into boiling oil and you along with it, my name is not Appanna. (21)

Shouting thus Appanna leaves the place. Lights change to night. The Cobra transforms Naga. As usual, he visits Rani who weeps and complains of her pitiable condition:

Why are you humiliating me like this? Why are you stripping me naked in front of the whole village? Why don't you kill me instead? I would have killed myself. But there's not even a rope in this house for me to use. (22)

Naga already knows the fate of Rani that “the Village Elders will sit in judgement. You will be summoned. That cannot be avoided.” (23) However, he tries to save her cleverly from ignominy and death. Like the mythical *Agnipariksha* of Sita in the *Ramayana*, Rani, too, has to face a trial to prove her chastity. Naga advises her to opt for the snake-ordeal to prove her innocence before the village elders. He tells her:

You know the ant-hill under the banyan tree. Almost like a mountain. A King Cobra lives in it. Say you will put your hand into the ant-hill. (24)

Naga asks her to “pull out the King Cobra” and take her “oath by that Cobra.” (25) When she questions, “Won't the Cobra bite me the moment I touch it?” (26) Naga says, “No, it won't bite. Only, you must tell the truth.” (27) Further, he makes her console, “All will be well, Rani. Don't worry. Your husband will become your slave tomorrow. You will get all you have ever wanted.” (28) With these words, Naga leaves. The next day Rani's trial takes place. Crowds of villagers gather at the place from all sides. The three Elders take their seat near the ant-hill. Elder II brings the case as follows:

It brings no credit to the village to have a husband publicly question his wife's chastity. But Appanna here says: since the day of our wedding, I have not once touched my wife or slept by her side. Any yet she is pregnant. He has registered the complaint, so we must judge its merits. (29)

From different traditional tests – “to take the oath while holding a red-hot iron in the hand” or “to plunge the hand in boiling oil,” (30) Rani gets ready swearing by the King Cobra. She is granted for permission the snake-ordeal. She goes to the ant-hill, plunges her hand into it and pulls the Cobra out. Then she takes oath, “Since coming to this village, I have held by this hand, only two...My husband and this Cobra... Yes, my husband and this King Cobra. Except for these two, I haven't touched any one of the male sex. Nor have I allowed any other male to touch me. If I lie, let the Cobra bite me.”

(31) The Cobra does not bite her. To the utter surprise of all it slides up her shoulder and spreads its hood like an umbrella over head. The crowd wonders. The Cobra lays its hood gently for a while, then becomes docile and moves over her shoulder like a garland. Music fills the skies. The lights change into soft, luminous glow. Rani watches uncomprehending as the Cobra slips back into the ant-hill. There are hosannas and cheers from the crowd. Elder I exclaims, "A miracle! A miracle!" Elder II declares her a "Divine Being" and Elder III calls her "a Goddess." (32) Appanna falls at her feet and says, "Forgive me. I am a sinner. I was blind." (33)

Rani gently takes him in her arms. Story thus tells of Rani's new life:

So Rani got everything she wished for, a devoted husband, a happy life. She even got a life-long servant to draw water for her house. For Appanna's concubine was present at the trial. When she saw Rani's glory, she felt ashamed of her sinful life and volunteered to do menial work in Rani's house. In due course, Rani gave birth to a wonderful child. A son. Rani lived happily ever after with her husband, child and servant. (34)

Generally Naga visits her and takes human shape and enters into Rani's bedroom. Finding her sleeping to her husband with her head on his shoulders and her long loose tresses hanging down from the edge of the cot, her child by her side, Naga covers his face with shame as though he cannot bear to see the scene. He expresses his anguish in the following manner:

Rani! My queen! The fragrance of my sights! The blossom of my dreams! In another man's arms. In another man's bed? Does she curl around him as passionately every night now? And dig her nails into his back? Bite his lips? And here I am – a sloughed-off skin on the tip of a thorn. An empty sac of snake-skin. No. I can't bear this. Someone must die. Someone has to die. Why shouldn't I kill her? If I bury my teeth into her breast now, she will be mine. Mine forever! (35)

As Naga has been loving her every night before her trial for chastity, he cannot bite her. On the other hand, he memorises his magical power for the last time and becomes the size of her tresses. Then he enters her tresses and makes love to them and finally "ties a tress into a noose and places it around his neck." (36) When Rani wakes up, she feels that her "head weighs a ton." (37) "She tries to comb her hair, but cannot." (38) Then she pleads her husband to comb her hair. "He has to struggle to get the comb through. A dead Cobra falls to the ground." (39) She realizes that the Cobra has spread all of them and particularly their "Son has been given the gift of life by the Cobra, as by a father." (40) Now she understands the role of Cobra in her life and, therefore, implores her husband, "when we cremate this snake, the fire should be lit by our son... And every year on this day, our son should perform the rituals to commemorate its death." (41) Before cremating it she sits staring at it. Her eyes flow with tears. "She bows down to the dead snake, then picks it up and

presses it to her cheeks.” (42) While sleeping with her husband and son, Rani again feels heaviness in her head. This time Appanna himself combs her hair. But now the Cobra falls out of her hair alive. Appanna runs to the kitchen to get a stick, in the meanwhile, Rani softly tells the Cobra:

You? What are you doing here? He'll kill you. Go. Go away. No! Not that way. He's there. What shall we do? What shall we do? Why did you ever come back here, stupid? (*Suddenly*) My hair! Of course, Come, quick. Climb into it. (*She lets her hair down to the floor.*) Quick now. Get it. Are you safely in there? Good. Now stay there. And lie still. You don't know how heavy you are. Let me get used to you, will you?...This hair is the symbol of my wedded bliss. Live in there happily, forever. (43)

Thus the “*Play with a Cobra*” ends.

Girish Karnad has declared that *Naga-Mandala* is “based on two oral tales from Karnataka” replete with mythical references. Pranav Joshipura opines that “it is significant to note that the title of the play comes not from any human character, but from a snake-Naga. The story of the Cobra suggests that the play not merely dramatizes the folktales in modern interpretation; it also implies a deeper meaning at various levels. In our Hindu mythology, the Naga represents several images. In South India, many houses have their own shrine which is often a grove reserved for snakes, consisting of trees, festooned with creepers, situated in a corner of the garden.” (44) Nagas are closely associated with Lord Shiva, and it is known in Indian mythology for his liberally granting the prayers of his devotees. In *Naga-Mandala*, Rani is given everything by the Naga, as he says, “I have given her everything. Her husband. Her child. Her home. Even her maid.” (45)

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Julia Kristeva's Views on Sign and Signification

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Julia Kristeva's book *La revolution du langagepoetique* was published in 1974. Some chapters of this book were translated as *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Kristeva founded her studies upon the fundamental premises of structuralism. She realized the limits of the static processes and nature of structuralism to understand the signification of things. She understood the restrictions posed by the formal studies on the signification process and made her intentions clear to take the external factors in the study of meaning. Kristeva (1997) writes:

For us, structuralism ...was already accepted knowledge. To simplify, this meant that one should no longer lose sight of the real constraints, "material", as we used to say, of what had previously and trivially been viewed as "form". For us, the topic of this formal reality constituted the very meaning of phenomena or events that then became structures (from kinship to literary texts) and thus achieved intelligibility without necessarily relying on "external factors." From the outset, however, our task was to take this acquired knowledge and immediately do something else (9).

Julia Kristeva realized that mere structure and form are not adequate enough to aid us in understanding the meaning in literature and other subjects. She went beyond the explorations of meaning through the static methods of structuralism to include history, time, event and the human subject in the study of meaning. Kristeva thought that signification is not a static process that can be confined only to the study of form and structure. Structure for Kristeva is not a linguistic entity but is also shaped by the speaking subject, the unconscious experience of the speaking subject and the social forces. Kristeva's book *Revolution in Poetic Language* provides us knowledge about her concept of signification that includes her discussion on the theory of language and the theory of subjectivity. As a post-structuralist, Kristeva emphasized on the human beings who she regards as the speaking subject. It is the human beings or the speaking subjects who signify and who are also shaped by the signifying practices. Thus, Kristeva's theory of language and signification is closely linked to her theory of subjectivity. Addition of human subject and history to the structure in the study of signification makes Kristeva a post-structuralist as she thinks that in order to understand things, it is necessary to "dynamize" the structure by taking into consideration the speaking subject and its unconscious experience on the one hand and, on the other, the pressures of other social structures" (9).

Kristeva's book *Semiotike: Re cherches pour unesemanalyse* (1969) and *la revolution du langagepoetique* (1974) translated into English as *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) contains a discussion on the concepts of Chora, the semiotic, the symbolic and language and subject. The discussion of these concepts demolishes the earlier notion of meaning as produced denotatively. Meaning is not produced only by form and structural arrangement of various linguistic elements in a text. Language cannot be treated as simply a formal and grammatical entity. This would be reducing the study of language to its skeleton and ignoring its poetic and affective aspects. The structuralists and the previous perspectives treated language as an autonomous and independent object of study. This view reduced the language to a separate, static and a dead artifact. Kristeva regards man as a speaking being. She regards language and the subjects who speak it as inseparable part of each other. Language is a signifying system. People not only use language but they are also made through the way they use a language. According to Kristeva (1989 b), "The speaking subject makes and unmakes himself" (265, 272). The insertion of subject into the signifying process by Kristeva makes language a dynamic process. People generate meaning and knowledge through the use of language in their own ways. By dynamic signifying process, Kristeva seems to mean the ejection of the human bodily drives and energy through the literal use of language. Signification is the infusion of the subject's feeling and emotions into language. The ejaculation of the subject's bodily drives and energy shapes the signification. Psychiatrists call the human feelings and sentiments as "affective". Those feelings and emotions infused into language provide it rhythm and make it alive and dynamic. If a speech or language is deprived of the rhythm constituted by human emotions and sentiments, it would be reduced to a lifeless, artificial, dead object that signifies nothing real and living. Kristeva says that language as a signifying system functions in two different ways. Firstly, when a subject curbs its emotions and sentiments and do not allow them to enter in the use of language, he expresses himself through clear and orderly meaning. Secondly, when the use of language is charged by a subject's bodily drives in the form of sentimental use of language, meaning is created through the poetic and the affective dimension of a text. The two modes of language use – one the clear and the second the poetic and the affective produces two different modes, symbolic and semiotic of signification. The symbolic mode of signification uses logical terms and common grammatical rules to convey meaning. This mode is noticed in the language of science, logic, reasoning and the subjects and the registers related to science and logic. The words used in a symbolic mode have literal meaning with little scope of ambiguity and vagueness. Kristeva uses the term symbolic to refer to an "orderly communication" as like Saussure she observes a gap always existing between a signifier and a signified. The semiotic use of words is governed by the

expression of one's feeling, desire and unconscious drive. The semiotic expression originates from the unconscious and charged with emotions and feelings. Semiotic is the conscious way of expression of oneself through a sign system constituted by grammar and syntax. Science and logic use symbolic mode of expression. Poetry, music, dance etc. use the semiotic mode of expression. The symbolic mode of expression is denotative in character whereas the semiotic mode of expression is largely connotative in character. According to Kristeva, the two modes of expression – the symbolic and the semiotic cannot be kept completely separate as language is intimately related to the subject who use it and subjectivity cannot be completely divorced from the unconscious drives and emotions and feelings. Kristeva selected a passage from Molly's soliloquy at the end of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. She found that meaning is expressed through both the modes of expression. Joyce use the logical terms to express the meaning through the symbolic mode and used the semiotic mode through emotionally charging the words by using them without any punctuation marks to (intermittent) check the flow of speech. The continuous flow of words used without punctuation is used to semiotically signify Molly's stream of consciousness. Kristeva through the analysis of Molly's soliloquy shows that the two modes of signification – the symbolic and the semiotic cannot be seen as exclusive with each other. They are rather used simultaneously to express the meaning. The symbolic mode of signification expressed by the logical terms is enthused by the (energy drive of the) semiotic mode of signification. Kristeva refers to children and exemplifies the baby's coos, babbles and other rhythmic noises as the semiotic expression of signification. She used the term 'chora' which she borrowed from Plato's "Timaeus" to mean the sounds, rhythms and tones which constitute a child's semiotic state of language before it learns to use the symbolic mode of signification. 'Chora' is the speech constituted by semiotic mode of signification expressed by a child through the use of sounds, rhythm and intonations before he learns to use a language through organized sounds and words to refer to objects. The semiotic chora is entered into symbolic mode of signification. Referring to the use of semiotic chora by infants, Kristeva (1984) writes:

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "psychical" marks, articulate what we call a chora: a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated (25).

Kristeva opines that a child first articulates some sounds like coos and babbles and uses some gestures to express itself and to express its emotions and sentiments. This is the first step in the direction of signifying meaning by

discharging energy. Kristeva calls it the semiotic state of signification. When a child becomes conscious of it, his initial efforts of signifying meaning intensifies. The child begins to make the next effort of using language to indicate at the objects and things. The child now also sees it as different from its environment. The child becomes conscious of itself (subject) and the other (object). After the semiotic state, the child now enters into the symbolic state of using a language to point out at objects which are other than him (the subject). This is the state of identity and difference. The child identifies animals or birds and imitates the sound of a dog as “woof-woof” or a cat as “mew-mew” or a bird as “coo-coo” and differentiates itself from the dog or the bird which are other than the child. The initial act of imitation of the sounds in a semiotic mode becomes the first step towards creating a proposition or the symbolic mode of signification. Kristeva calls the state between the semiotic and the symbolic as the thetic phase. According to Kristeva (1984):

We view the thetic phase – the positing of the imago, castration, and the positing of semiotic motility – as the place of the Other, as the precondition for signification, i.e. the precondition for the positing of language. The thetic phase marks a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic (48).

After the semiotic stage, the child enters into the stage of learning the rules and syntax of language in order to use language as a systematic means of communication. He after spontaneously uttering few onomatopoeic sounds learns to name objects and things. Then he enters into the symbolic mode of signification. Kristeva is of the view that the semiotic mode of signification charged by the inner drives, energy and emotions of the subject always remains as an undercurrent with the symbolic mode of signification. The plain language that consists of the (relationship) blend of the sound-image (signifiers) and the meaning (signified) has the imprints of semiotic motility even though of a lesser degree.

Kristeva discusses the lingual growth of a child. The child first exhibits the ‘chora’ or develops the energy drive that facilitates in initiating the signifying process. The energy drive is manifested at this stage through the sounds, gestures and intonations. This is the semiotic stage. At the next level, the child realizes its individuality and sees itself as different from the environment (or object). The child at this stage enters the symbolic state and equips itself to use a language. But the child does not separate itself altogether from the semiotic state of signification. Semiotic mode inseparably remains with the symbolic mode in all types of communication from the poetic to even logical and the straightforward. Kristeva(1980) writes,

It goes without saying that, concerning a signifying practice, that is, a socially communicable discourse like poetic language, this semiotic heterogeneity posited by theory is inseparable from what I call, to distinguish it from the

latter, the symbolic function of significance. The symbolic, as opposed to the semiotic, is this inevitable attribute of meaning, sign and the signified object... Language as social practice necessarily presupposes these two dispositions [the semiotic and the symbolic], though combined in different ways to constitute types of discourse, types of signifying practices (134).

In her book *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva discusses the different aspects of a literary text which she calls the genotext and phenotext. She equates the genotext and phenotext with the two elements of signification – semiotic and the symbolic. Semiotic elements of signification which are manifested through rhythm and tone are the energy drives which remains under the surface and do not signify. The symbolic on the other hand is equated to phenotext. Phenotext refers to the syntax and grammar of a text that signifies meaning. Phenotext is the simple language of communication (plain language) that signifies. Kristeva regards that both genotext and phenotext together constitute the signifying process.

Saussure and other linguists studied language as an autonomous and self-contained entity. Kristeva relates the study of language to the speaking subject. She studies the various states and elements of the signifying process which she observes as comprising of the semiotic and the symbolic. The semiotic remains intertwined with the symbolic and both of them together contribute to signification. Once the child reaches the semiotic stage, it enters into the thetic phase i.e. the development of its subjectivity. The child recognizes its individuality and learns to convey meaning through “orderly communication”. Kristeva’s attempt to associate signification with the subject makes signification a dynamic process that becomes susceptible to change with the entry of subject in it.

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Expectations and Frustrations of the Marginalized Class: A Post-colonial Study of Aravind Adiga's *Selection Day*

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The predicament of the marginalized class has been a significant theme in the novels of Aravind Adiga. As his debut novel *The White Tiger* incontrovertibly consists of the theme of the class divide between the haves and the have-nots in the post-colonial era in India, and as his *Last Man in Tower* deals with the conflict between the pragmatic materialism of the elite class and the middle class ethos in the post-liberalized capitalist India, *Selection Day* also comprises the same theme of the scabrous condition of the marginalized class of people in post-independent India. The same inhuman relation between the exploiter and the exploited, dominating upper class and the subjugated people of the lower strata in society continues even after the British colonizers left India in 1947. The dominations and dictations of the white people have been replaced by a few people who are socio-economically and politically highly influential in society. These upper class people—who often belong to the upper caste also—take hold of all the socio-economic and political positions and therefore exercise their power unflinchingly in the contemporary society. As Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd writes: ‘...in the context of the politico-economic and spiritual assimilation that was taking place among casteist social forces, a kind of all-India ‘upper’ caste supremacy had begun to emerge. By 1947 itself an all-India ‘upper’ caste elite—the new *bhadralok* (the ‘upper’ caste combine)—was ready to take over the whole range of post-colonial institutions’ (Shepherd 48). Consequently, the majority of people who are socio-economically under-privileged are marginalized and deprived of all the fundamental requirements for their self-development and self-realization. Hopes are hindered, dreams are devastated and expectations extirpated. Dehumanization, demoralization and disempowerments are the mere outcomes of all the hard efforts of the marginalized class. This reality is very much exposed by the authors of post-colonial India in their fictional works. As NDR Chandra in his “Introduction” to *Postcolonial Indian English Fiction: Critical Understanding* points out: ‘Postcolonial Indian Literature also brought canonical and pedagogical revolution with its multicultural outlook. In its orientation, it led to the discourse on Dalits, Tribals, marginalized and subaltern people and their literature’ (Chandra xvii).

In *Selection Day* Aravind Adiga also very trenchantly critiques this reality of the post-colonial India where expectations of young aspirants of the marginalized class like Radha and Manju, in spite of their possessing great innate talents, are thwarted only because they belong to socio-economically so-called marginalized class. As they are socio-economically marginalized, naturally, they are the most deprived and underprivileged people in the Mumbai slum. The macabre condition of the poor class is rightly summed up by G. A. Ghanshyam when he writes: 'The marginalized, the subaltern, the dalit; call him whatever you may, one thing remains constant and that is his daily struggle for existence as the repressed, downtrodden and exploited section of society' (Ghanshyam 68). Radha Krishna and Manjunath the two sons of Mohan Kumar whom he wants to make the world's number one and number two batsmen, but Mohan Kumar is a chutney salesman by profession having no other sources of earnings in his life. Consequently, from the very beginning of their life what pervades is nothing but the impenetrable darkness of poverty. In their vernacular language of Kannada this darkness is called *kattale*, and the third person omniscient author makes it very clear that this darkness is 'so much darker than any English-language darkness' (1).

Mohan Kumar certainly belongs to the socio-economically marginalized class since his early childhood, and like all other fellow members of his class he has experienced all the hardships of naked poverty:

Mohan Kumar had grown up in the poorest end of a poor taluk: Ratnagiri halli in Alur, in the foothills of the Western Ghats. As a boy, each morning at four, he stood on the back of an open lorry that took him to a coffee estate. There he signed his name in a long green register. Then he cleared twigs, dropped sunna from his four fingers in white circles around the plants, and watered the bushes, taking more care of the Arabica, and less care of the Robusta. At ten o'clock, the man supervising the estate paid him three and a half rupees, and he climbed back onto the open lorry. There was school for the rest of the day. He learnt to read and write. This was something new for his family.... All this was as it been for generations in his family. (47)

Mohan Kumar belonging to such poverty-stricken marginalized class knows very well that if he wants to grow his two sons as cricketing stars they must be trained rigorously and laboriously. As such, he trains Radha and Manju quite tyrannically. All the boyhood pleasures are denied to the two boys, and they are totally under the inhuman control of their callous father. The pragmatic and utilitarian father Mohan Kumar sets rules for the boys in all the fields of their life. They grow up amidst the most restricted circumstances: no video games, no girls, no pornography, no car driving, not even saving beards are allowed to the boys.

In spite of dehumanising poverty Mohan Kumar hopes for the fulfilment of his dream and raises his sons in such a way that they also desire the same.

Mohan Kumar expects to make his elder son Radha the world's number one batsman and the younger Manju the world's second best batsman. Mohan Kumar is very much optimistic about the actualization of his dream because he knows 'There is a secret blessing given to my son Radha by the Lord Subramanya, who is our family deity...' (15). Manju also begins to internalize this subordinateness authorized by his father: '*I am the second-best batsman in the whole world*' (13). In such expectations they grow up from the very beginning of their boyhood. Being a slum-dweller and belonging to the marginalized class Mohan Kumar has to tolerate diverse kinds of mockeries and ridicules thrown at him by everybody in the neighbouring area. Yet he is determined to produce the greatest champions from his own family which is but socio-economically so underprivileged. Mohan Kumar wounded by both economic background and social status thus realises: 'Revenge is the capitalism of the poor: conserve the original wound, defer immediate gratification, fatten the first insult with new insults, invest and reinvest spite, and keep waiting for the perfect moment to strike back' (40). Mohan Kumar expects that only success in cricket can redeem him from his abject poverty and he strikes back literally by selling his sons to the reach cricketing sponsor Anand Mehta who is introduced to him by Tommy Sir, the talent scout for the Mumbai Cricket Association. Anand Mehta agrees to support Mohan Kumar's family in exchange of 'a *certain* interest, by which I mean a fair percentage, in his marketing revenues' (36-37). And herein starts all the corruption and nastiness in cricket. As Kamila Shamsie so rightly points out:

Cricket is, of course, a wonderful way of writing about shattered dreams – both personal and national. As such, it isn't necessary to know the game to appreciate this finely told, often moving and intelligent novel. Cricket here represents what is loved in India, and yet is being corrupted by the changes within the nation. As Tommy Sir, the cricket coach who yearns to discover the next Bradman or Sobers, remarks: "How did this thing, our shield and chivalry, our Roncesvalles and Excalibur, go over to the other side, and become part of the great nastiness?" That Tommy Sir himself is part of the great nastiness, introducing the teenage brothers and their father to a man who bankrolls them during their adolescence in return for a cut of all future sponsorship deals, only makes the question more poignant. (Shamsie)

In the postcolonial situation men like Anand Mehta truly replace the British exploiters in colonized India, and his character is representative of the upper class people in India, who maintain their socio-economic hegemony simply by enslaving and exploiting the marginalized class. Dr. Ashish Gupta points out: 'Adiga's disgust with the inequality, exploitation, and hypocrisy of Indian society runs through the novel in a subtle, acidic current...' (Gupta 114). In the novel Mohan Kumar's reminiscence of a big elephant's being controlled by a certain magician thirty years ago in his village clearly tells the whole

truth of the postcolonial situation. Mohan Kumar watched 'That massive beast, with all its muscles, was helpless: it obeyed the brain-waves of its master, it suffered the enchantments of his black magic' (32). Later Mohan Kumar realized by looking around the poverty-ridden farmers toiling hard in his village: 'We are no more unmanacled than that elephant' (32). Even the worst is happening now in contemporary India since 'Here, we can't even see our chains' (32). Marginalised people of India like Mohan Kumar are totally under the control and manipulation of the elites in the post-colonial India. In this regard Dwight Garner's observation deserves to be mentioned:

Mr. Adiga, who was born in India and attended Columbia and Oxford, again displays what might be his greatest gifts as a postcolonial novelist: His strong sense of how the world actually works, and his ability to climb inside the minds of characters from vastly different social strata. (Garner)

Under such postcolonial circumstances cricket is a great expectation for young generation: it is the biggest sensation for young boys in the modern age. Anand Mehta, the rich utilitarian businessman knows this truth very well and therefore exploits the young generations in the name of cricket. Mehta's realization of the postcolonial situation is clearly evident when he informs Mr Jo-Jo, the American investment banker about cricket as a purely male-dominated game in India: 'We had to get rid of English, I always say, in order to enjoy the benefits of English civilization' (94). Mehta also is aware of the postcolonial situation in India that unlike any other game in this country, cricket has the greatest paramountcy so much so that even the government has had to make it a compulsory game in the country. Mehta further informs the American investment banker that due to female infanticide and selective abortion of girl children 'young Indian males, lacking women to marry or even to mate with, are likely to become progressively more deranged. This is already visible. Now, only one thing on earth can save us from all this rogue Hindu testosterone. Cricket' (94). As such, betting, corruption, money, political intervention all are significant parts of this game of cricket: 'the whispering and bargaining, the lies and corruption: it has just begun, and before the sun rises again, India will be sold and India will be bought, many, many times over' (139).

Radha and Manju, the two young brothers under the guidance of their father and out of their own passion for the game of cricket initially hope for the best in the cricketing game. The marginalized Kumar family finds Anand Mehta as the rich escalator in reaching their higher level in the game so that they can fulfil their dream. With the money prepaid by Anand Mehta the Kumar family also financially rises to a higher standard from their mere miserable poverty-stricken condition. From the slum area of Dahisar in Mumbai they move to the Tattamasi Housing Society in the posh area of Chedda Nagar in Mumbai. Their life immediately changes from mere marginalization to the middle class aristocracy:

Only when their father held open the wooden door bearing the nameplate 'B.B. Balasubramaniam' (the landlord who had sucked 40,000 rupees out of them as a security deposit), and told them to go in, Radha fast, did the boys start to believe it. Manju entered, touching the wall with both hands. Can this really be our new home? Overnight, they had become the kind of people who had a working air-conditioner, a big grey fridge, and a largely automatic washing machine. A wooden cupboard just for cricketing gear, equipment, food supplements and antibiotics. Attached to it, a full-length mirror, so they could rehearse their strokes at any time of day or night. (60-61)

This social disparity between the condition of the slum-dwellers and the luxury and comfort of the privileged class is very scathingly presented in the novel. As Sree Ayyar points out: 'Adiga explicitly attacks social inequality, as he describes the original slum where the brothers live, Dahisar in Mumbai, and their later home in the wealthy Mumbai suburb of Chembur, more so as the imagery of "corrugated tin roof" and "roads of wealth, not squalor"' (Ayyar).

As class divide in India, the incompatibility between the rich and the poor, is one of the major concerns in Adiga's fictional writings, in *Selection Day* one golden proverb of Mohan Kumar runs throughout the novel: 'Big thief walks free. Small thief gets caught' (29). Aravind Adiga himself is very vocal against this class divide prevalent in the country: 'India is a society of profound inequality and inequality is not just a moral vice – it also leads to instability' (qtd from Nimsarkar and Shubha 20). Mohan Kumar's instability, whimsy, Mephistophelian wickedness all are the results of such social inequality in the post-colonial India. Mohan Kumar's expectations soar so high that he even imagines the unthinkable: 'Mohan Kumar's plan is just beginning. Because his sons will soon have sons, and they too will bat: a dynasty of cricketers is rising in Mumbai from two drops of Kumar semen' (80).

But all hopes are shattered, all dreams broken when one rich upper class Muslim boy namely Javed Ansari enters into the life of this Kumar family just four days after they moved to their new house. They witness the advent of a new cricketing star in the form of Javed Ansari: 'A star rises on the horizon: not in the city, the traditional nursery of cricketing wizardry, but across the creek, in the suburb of Navi Mumbai' (61). Javed does not only belong to the rich upper class family but also he has rich cricketing source in his ancestry; he is the 'nephew of Ranji Trophy middle-order star Imtiaz Ansari, who now represents Yorkshire county in England' (62). Javed's father also 'once donned the flannels for Aligarh University and has been a cricket commentator for the BBC Hindi service' (62). Now the Kumar family begins to realise that Javed is the biggest rival in the cricketing field and with the combination of both economic affluence and social influence Javed is irresistible on the selection day. Hopes and expectations get decimated in the life of the marginalized Kumar family. Radha, who is expected to become the number one batsman in the world begins to doubt of his own future: 'When Radha saw that silhouette

inside the car, his heart contracted: he felt again that suspicion which now gnawed at him that despite everything his father said, his contract with God was not fool-proof, and he might not prove to be the best batsman in the world – and so he sweated...' (63).

What is most significantly portrayed in the novel is Manju, the protagonist's hopes and expectations and how they are dismantled in the socio-economic perspectives in the post-colonial India. Manju's sole interest is not on cricket but many other academic and creative possibilities which are stunted by his father's authoritarian Machiavellianism and the demoralizing socio-economic condition. But like a genuine creative boy he wants to be free from all such impediments. As Soumya Rao points out:

Manju's dislike for the sport forms the crux of Selection Day, a coming-of-age tale of two brothers whose athletic potential is milked by an authoritarian father whose sole ambition is to turn his sons into cricket stars. Manju's antipathy towards the game is immediately inferred, but not abjectly stated. That's how it works best, because the young protagonist is the amalgamation of hundreds of repressed impulses, bursting and yet struggling to break out of the rules imposed by parents and society. (Rao)

Manju loves studies, and more particularly science, more than cricket; yet his tyrannical father goads him to follow the game of cricket to eradicate their abominable poverty: 'What was the point anyway of studying? He, like Radha, would have to drop out after the SSC exams to concentrate on cricket. Their father had already decided' (82). But Manju's passion lies in science and his sole aim in life is not to become a cricketer but to become a forensic pathologist. Javed reads the mind of Manju very well and perceives 'He wants to be free/ But he is scared of his father' (81). They become intimate friends verging on a secretive homoerotic relationship. In the meantime, Manju shows his brilliant performance in cricket and gets the opportunity to spend six weeks in England, which rages the ire of both his father and his elder brother Radha. The fraternal rivalry as well as the paternal anger begin to tear apart all the family relationships. Javed repeatedly propels Manju against the oppression of his father's authoritarian decisions and wants him to be free from the clutches of his father's utilitarianism: 'Look at Manju go to England, spend six weeks there, eat the cheese, breathe the scented air, and come back and still behave like a *slave*!' (155). It is again Javed who makes Manju feel disillusioned of the fallacy of cricket in India in the postcolonial India. Javed makes him realize that cricket is a game which is exclusive only for the rich and the poor boys like Manju can never prosper in this game which involves huge money as well as rampant corruption: '...where others saw a game called Test match, or one-day, or twenty-twenty, Javed saw only a circle of fat rich men, like the ring of glossy black birds that sit in the middle of the Bandra *talao*' (169).

As the Selection Day approaches frustration preoccupies the mind of Radha, the elder brother, too, when he realises that he cannot be selected in the Mumbai under-19 cricket team and can never become the number one champion in cricket. Fraternal rivalry has already devastated their family relationships, and Radha becomes more aggressive towards Manju both because of the latter's vulnerability in making a homosexual relationship with Javed and his surpassing him in cricketing talent. Frustration reaches its culmination before the Selection Day and he threatens his brother Manju to get early out to pave the way for his elder brother; but on the Selection Day Radha gets early out, and out of total frenzy he beats the bowler and escapes the town only to take shelter in his old village where he is compelled to work in the field with other poor peasants. Manju despite playing extraordinary cricket before the selectors decides against playing cricket. Mohan Kumar is in total frustration and desperately needs money to pay the debt of Tommy Sir and Anand Mehta. Out of sheer despondency Mohan Kumar grows a kind of nihilism when all his hopes are torn into pieces:

'Things just happen to people like Mohan Kumar and his sons. No reason. No meaning. No 'Because' (P 225). In this regard Annalisa Quinn rightly observes: '... Adiga's story is not about the path to glory in cricket as much as it is about the paths closed off by it... "I was looking for the key for years / But the door was always open," repeats the garrulous, murderous narrator of Adiga's Booker Prize-winning novel *The White Tiger*. *Selection Day*, a slower, sadder, and ultimately more moving novel, is a tragedy of never testing the door.' (Quinn)

To conclude, Adiga's *Selection Day* is a genuine postcolonial text which very realistically exposes the gulf of difference between the aspiration and achievement as experienced by the marginalized class of people in the post-liberalised India. Adiga uses the metaphor of cricket to bring home the fact that this is a game which involves the frenzied sensation of young generation but actually is 'a fraud, and at the most fundamental level' (237). This game of cricket is, in fact, an incarnation of frustration and futility in the lives of young marginalized section in the post-independence era in the nation. As Laura Miller so appropriately points out: 'You need not know anything about cricket in any of its variations to savor *Selection Day*. In fact, you don't need to have any interest in sports at all. Cricket serves Adiga as a marvelously flexible metaphor: for the (lost) dream of civic integrity, for tradition and authority, for the contest that is life in a rapidly evolving economy...Class is Adiga's great theme, and his depiction of its workings in India ranges from the fondly comical to the savage.' (Miller)

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Dina Mehta's Voice of Protest in *Brides are Not for Burning*

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Marriage has been the greatest and most important of all institutions in human society since time immemorial. It has always existed in one form or another in every culture and custom ensuring social sanction to a physical union between man and woman and laying the foundation for building up of the family – the basic unit of society. The concept of giving dowry (*dahej*) in the form of bride prize is one of the most ancient practices of India. The Vedas prescribe that a dowry is to be given by the bride's family to the groom. The Rig Veda states that cows and gifts given by the Aryan father of the bride to the daughter accompanied the bride's procession. Dowry is referred to as '*Streedhana*' and is an ancient practice. This custom implied that women were, in addition to being viewed as mere sex objects, severe economic liabilities for the parents. In ancient times, a dowry was given to the groom and his family in exchange for the bride as a way of ensuring that she is properly taken care of and comfortable at the groom's home. Over a time, it became a common practice for groom's family to torture the bride in the name of Dowry. Thus, dowry, which is the very root of the Hindu evils of sati and bride-burning, is given 'divine' sanction by the 'noble' Hindu gods.

In this play, the author Dina Mehta showcases how women passively suffer the atrocities and humiliation done to them in the name of culture and convention. Under *Indian Penal Code*, giving or taking dowry is a punishable act. The guilty may be imprisoned for not less than five years, also a fine, not less than 15 thousand, may be imposed. Despite all stringent and punitive legal aid, crimes against women are not lessening. The play, *Brides are not for Burning*, explores this crucial aspect in its investigation.

Dina Mehta is an accomplished Parsi Indian writer in English. She has carved her niche in the field of drama. She has written two novels *And Some Take a Lover* (1992) and *Mila in Love* (2003), two books of short stories *The Other Woman and Other Stories* (1981) and *Miss Menon Did Not Believe in Magic and Other Stories* (1994) and several prize-winning plays like *Brides Are Not for Burning* which won the first prize in a worldwide playwriting competition sponsored by the BBC in 1979. *The Myth Makers* (1969), *Tiger Tiger* (1978), *Getting Away With Murder* (1989), and *A Sister Like You* (1996). In her plays, she dramatizes real life incidents to bring to the limelight social issues such as the evil of dowry, female feticide, child abuse, rape, subjugation of women, and so on. As the title *Brides Are Not for Burning* implies an account of a

theatrical presentation of violence against women victimized by the dowry system. Mehta dedicates this play to "All the angry young women who can be whatever they choose to be" (1). The play won the first prize in a worldwide playwriting competition sponsored by the BBC in 1979.

The play unravels the conspicuous concern for women in society that how on account of the unfulfillment of the desired amount to the side of in-laws, the daughter of a helpless father, a sister to a powerless brother and a younger sibling, is forced to commit suicide. Nevertheless, in-laws do not feel slight compunction to the act and prove it to be an accident, not intentional murder. To establish any act as a crime the law has two phrases: *Mens Rea* and *actus Reus* which interpret "guilty mind" and "guilty act". Third Institutes defines, "*actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea.*" *The act is not guilty unless mind is guilty* (Edward Coke). In the play both the causes are evident and establish the above act as a legal crime against Lakshmi. The play is about a girl — Lakshmi, who is married to Vinod. Her father stakes all his hard-earned money to quench the thirst of the in-laws and want to see his daughter happy. Unfortunately, it results into unthinkable repercussions. Lakshmi was tortured and traumatized by her in-laws and they allegedly accused her barren for not bearing any child, even after many years of marriage. However, the truth was otherwise. It was Vinod who was impotent, deficient for not being able to produce any issue, even after so many years of marriage. In order to conceal the truth of her son, Laxmi's mother in law put the blame on to her (Lakshmi). Subsequently, constant torture and incessant infliction of pain upon Lakshmi culminated into the drastic step of her committing suicide.

Indian Law, enacted on May 1, 1961, intended to prevent the giving or receiving of a dowry. Under the Dowry Prohibition Act; dowry includes property, goods, or money given by either party to the marriage, by the parents of either party, or by anyone else in connection with the marriage. The Dowry Prohibition Act applies to persons of all religions in India. Indian Penal code establishes specific dowry related cruelty, dowry death and abetment of suicide. These crimes against women either by her husband or relatives underscore punishable offense in the eyes of law in cases of demand of dowry. *Section 498A of Indian Penal Code* has provision that husband and relatives can automatically be arrested upon complaint of bride of dowry harassment. In 2014, there had been various false and widely abused of this law because of which Supreme court of India issued that arrest cannot be made without magistrate's approval.

The playwright has pertinently dealt with the issue and critiqued women also for being guilty of the crime. Abetment of suicide also amounts an offence under the Indian legal system. An incident, which was a consequence of the abetment of suicide, was allegedly proven accident in the play. Lakshmi, the bride who was married to Vinod committed suicide which was abetted by her in-laws she was married off with all possible materials which her father could manage. In spite of holding a clerk job, he made it a point that all demands by in-laws be fulfilled. He quotes:

“Marriage is 12 *tolas* of gold, 2000 rupees for the hall; utensils of steel, saris of silk...their expectations were endless because they imagined a government clerk makes so much on the side”.

A father has swallowed the humiliation by the in-laws, reason being he wanted to marry his daughter to a good match which he then thought Vinod to be a good and gentleman. Truth unravels later that after she burnt herself, Vinod her husband, pocketed insurance money of 80 thousand. Not only did he do this but also remained apathetic towards her. He did not call doctor on time to save her life. Anil, her brother states:

“...My sister’s death occurred between 7:15 and 7:30 p.m. And the fire must have been put out well before 8....yet you did not send Kalu for Dr. Lodha till almost 11 at night, why.” (61)

After Anil categorically states the fact that Lakshmi was murdered by her in laws, including Vinod: - “If a girl is ill -treated during the first five years of marriage, it will be deemed an attempt to extract money”(63) After having the fear of getting truth revealed, to placate Anil, Vinod offered him a small sum of insurance money and tried to talk him out of it. They tormented and humiliated her because the dowry she brought them was not what they had angled for. Increasingly, in Indian society, it is said that in most of the dowry cases it is women who inflict pain upon brides and torture them for not bringing material possessions. This social evil is still incorrigible. Women against women cause lots of stir in family turbulence. Likewise, Mehta unearths the same aspect when we meet the mother in law of Lakshmi in the play. She is a stereotypical mother in law who wants to have upper hand in the family affair and always, whenever occasions come, makes Lakshmi feel insignificant as a family member. “Pure autonomy is a dream of evil. It is also the myth of middle class society (*Eagleton 12*).” The vicious nature of mother in law is clearly evident in the conversation between Malini and Tarla, while Malini was investigating how her sister died; Tarla told her how villainous the mother in law is:

“...she is the kind of woman who would wring the neck of flowers... She said that Lakshmi’s womb would remain barren— if it was not already diseased and rotting— because of misdeeds in past life.”

She was constantly hounded by her in laws. One day, she locked herself in and set fire, that too in presence of everyone at the home. Not only she died of burn but the coroner’s verdict proven it to be an accident. On account of having upper hand in the terms of money and political clout they turn the verdict in their favor and Lakshmi’s family felt betrayed. Malini pertinently quotes:

“I spit on your law course! Playthings in the hands of exploiters and reactionaries, they deal out one kind of justice to rich, another to the poor.”(18)

Ironically, the law which has stringent punishment in case of abetment of suicide under *Indian Penal Code, Evidence Act and Criminal Procedure code* could

not dispense justice to Lakshmi. Dina Mehta pertinently raises this issue in her work. Truth shall prevail with this idea Lakshmi's brother –Anil and her sister –Malini try to seek justice for their sister. The play has open ended closure inviting audiences'perceptive to ruminate over the burning issue of dowry death and realize in true sense that *Brides are not for Burning*. Dowry death is a social curse which is a burning issue in Indian society. Organized approach by women welfare organizations, police, public servants and judiciary by applying deterrent punishment for dowry deaths culprit. It can be observed that government of India along with Indian judiciary makes co-operative and supportive law to safeguard the life interest and dignity of women and provide further justice to the victim of harassment or cruelty by husband and his relatives. Change in education system led to an improvement in the education status of female and will lesser down dowry deaths. Still, certain corrective measures need to be adopted to eradicate or at least curb this social menace of dowry death, but most importantly it needs a public will and commitment to shun away materialistic greed of dowry demands.

Consequently, the play ends unresolved, leaving it upon the audience to come up with certain resolutions and realize their mite to contribute to society. Each one of us is accountable to unpleasant happenings to women and we must take it upon ourselves to eradicate it. It is true that nothing can be permanently curbed from society yet we can feel responsible to keep a check on it. In addition to it, several agencies help us curb it. There are legal aids to almost every crime and should be used in order to maintain the balance of life and help in smooth living it, peacefully. Our prompt responses to crimes against women are the best remedy to mitigate and alleviate the rate of it. In this connection the two works by Dina Mehta generate awareness amongst audience and offers a fresh perspective to look at it through the social and legal vantage point.

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Class Consciousness in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*

KUMAR PARAG

John Osborne is interested in the image of one man fighting singlehanded against his country, but he is not so interested in the issues that make fighting necessary. In his letter, as in Porter's tirades, the mood of disgust is clear and the gesture of rejection is also clear but the reasons for them are anything but clear. His play *Luther* is about a rebel, but it is only very superficially concerned with Indulgences and Justification by Faith, and it is scarcely concerned with other questions of dogma or abuses in the Roman Catholic Church. He presents the rebellion without bothering about the reasons beyond it. This is the reason why Osborne writes in terms of monologues and this is why his heroes usually dispose of the structures of the plays containing them. They are full of fighting spirit, but they are not sure what they fight for at all. They fight against neither limited to nor defined by the incidents and relations that make up the action, and while the mouthpiece monologue dictate the rhythm and shape of the whole play, as they do, it is possible for the spokesman-hero to be put into any sort of critical perspective (Hayman, 1968: 8). 3 *Look Back in Anger* is about a group of people lived in Midland town in 1950s. Jimmy Porter the husband is an ex-undergraduate, who married a woman from a class higher than his own. This marriage widens the gap between the husband and his wife, because they come from different social groups and they have different cultural, educational and social backgrounds. Jimmy's friend Cliff is sharing with them the flat and helps him in running a sweet-stall. The play is occupied by long frustrated tirades of abuse by which Porter heaps insult on his society, and its hypocrisy and absence of values. Most of this abuse spilled over into scathing attacks on his wife and his friend. He is used to mock his wife's origins and he can not find a way to reconcile the hatred created with the attraction and emotions, which he feels for her. Another character appears in the play adding a new atmosphere to the flat, this character is Alison's friend Helena, who, for the first time, tries to bridge the gaps and to find solutions to the non-natural marital relation of Jimmy and his wife but ultimately she is convinced that Alison should leave the flat (Jeffares, 2002: 91). In this play the convention employed is called natural convention, in which the audience is asked to accept that what occurs on the stage is a credible imitation of a real or natural behavior. Most of the characters remain speechless on the stage and the meaning of

what is said is modified by their reactions, but Jimmy's speech occupies the whole dialogue, thus this character is given a wide space to speak since he acts as a representative of the working society (Ibid: 140). 4 The Mood of the Angry Young Man Anger is the right word John Osborne used in his title "angry young man" which stayed as a catchphrase for a long time, but anger should be directed against something and if it is about everything, then it is not anger. Jimmy Porter has the same quantity of sulphuric energy poured into attacks he launches on everything around him; Alison, Helena, Cliff, the social system, women in general, Sunday papers and conservative Parliament members etc (Hayman, 1968:2). Jimmy is the most significant character in the play due to his sophisticated personality in comparison with the other characters, who are simple ones. His anger plays a prominent part in his personality. Psychologically, he is angry and dissatisfied with life in general and he can not blend himself with the environment and people around him. So, he throughout the play is attacking things: he exposes the absurdity of evening invocations to the Coptic goddess of fertility, in which some people of Midland are indulging. Due to a newspaper report, a participant in those rites killed a small cock and drank its blood. Then, he finds a chance to have a sarcasm at Alison's mother, saying that she must have been sticking pins into his waxen image for years. He also attacks the concept of sacrifice, justifying that people are sacrificing things they do not need in the first place. He illustrated this point saying that people give up their beliefs, careers or pleasure of sex because they are not capable of ever wanting them. So, they are not appreciated because their action is not really a sacrifice but a pretence of sacrifice. He reveals the hypocrisy of people who offer sacrifices to their The fundamental point of Jimmy's character is his relation with the past. The tittle of the play contains the essential contradiction that Jimmy's character explores. He becomes angry when he looks back at the past in which he longs to be contained, but he can not ever quite accept. It is not because he has a better dream to offer, but because he can not accept the dreams of the past except by a process of sentimentalizing them. He is survived by idealizing the past and by the mental image of the past, which for Jimmy is a resort and a place of recuperation to which he travels when emptiness of present and desolation of future become unbearable. His anger starts in human idealism and the desire that men must be more honest, alive and more human than they normally are. His sense of outrage is little controlled by either stoicism, selflessness or any elucidative discipline of the mind that it degenerates into moods profoundly destructive to life. His motives are mixed, so his anger with Alison centers either in a solid desire to save her or in ugly kind of possessiveness heavily disguised (Taylor, 1968: 26). Certainly, Jimmy's anger is vital in the play; it drives and moves the wheel of the play. Anger is the prominent feature of the play as well as the origin of energy, which is as unclear as its direction; it is a

devastating force. Jimmy is called a repressed homosexual, a frustrated artist, sadomasochist and idealist without causes. No one of these descriptions seems to help, because Jimmy eluded them. His tirades would look to many spectators what they already are: irrelevant, silly and unbearable. Jimmy's views are the product of his energy quarrelling with a society that seems to be small for him. He must be eccentric 6 rather than ego-eccentric and the refusal of English society must imply a moral judgment on that society. He mustn't be allowed to erupt as a volcano, smothering Cliff, Alison and Helena with his energy (Mander, 1961: 145). Throughout the play, Jimmy is cursing people and several things because he is dissatisfied with life. What causes his anger seems to be the inequality between his origin of working class and his wife's upper class. One more reason beyond his dissatisfaction is the routine of life he follows which does not offer a variety or excitement. He dislikes Sundays because they annoy him by their sameness: "Always the same rituals. Reading the papers, drinking tea, ironing. A few more hours and another week gone. Our youth is slipping away" (p.8). Since Cliff and Alison are empty from any kind of enthusiasm, this plays a role in Jimmy's bitterness: "Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm. Just enthusiasm that is all." A little later he complains: "Nobody thinks nobody cares. No beliefs no convictions and no enthusiasm. Just another Sunday evening" (p.9). His father's death is still clearly an apparent reason of anger; he saw his father dying when he was ten years old and this experience at this age made a very deep impression on his mind: "You see, learnt at an early age what it was to be angry-angry and hopeless. And I can never forget it. I knew more about love, betrayal and death when I was ten years old" (p.52). The estrangement of emotions by his wife also took part in his frustration: "There's a hardly moment when I'm not watching and wanting you. Nearly four years of being in the same room with you night and day and I still can't stop my sweat breaking out when I see you doing something 7 as ordinary as leaning over an ironing board" (p.27). These reasons grouped together to create an angry young man, who feels frustrated, because society is callous and does not treat him gently. The Representative of Working Class Generation Look Back in Anger led to the emergence of working-class drama at a particular stage of cultural and social change in Britain. The life that comes through is disorganized and drifting, poverty and youth are factors in this, but the general condition of feeling matters is more in these plays than any precise social setting. The true social experience is of a general disorganization, restlessness and frustration which had elements in common with an utterly different dramatic style it replaced (Williams, 1968: 367). Jimmy porter is merely a spokesman for his generation and there is a solid connection between the individual and the psychological troubles he encounters; the troubles of the whole generation in the early 1950s. He is a good example of people who were born into the working class (Jeffares:

129). Jimmy regards himself and is regarded by the author as a spokesman for the younger post-war generation, which looks round at the universe and finds nothing right with it. He shares his forlorn bohemia with his wife and his friend who assists him at running a sweet shop. It is not difficult to understand that his restless displeasure, which is expressed in a set of speeches of great length and cruelty, should make the place uncomfortable for the others (Taylor: 35).⁸ Definitely, Jimmy makes cool cutting remarks concerning contemporary society as a result of his own peculiar personality problems. He is an extremely peculiar young man and anything but a representative of a generation of young men. His ranting is usually the natural outgrowth of his psychotic state: it is a defense mechanism he uses to hurt his wife, Alison. He is a sort of those who need but they are too proud to ask, absolute devotion, which he needs from his wife who came from upper-class family. His dilemma is not the hypocrisy and vicious injustice of social order, it's his suppressed awareness of insoluble psychological paradox resulted by his desperate dominating need to have a woman's complete love and his simultaneous constitutional inability to get along with anyone. His bursts are the overflow of bitterness when his wife fails to measure up to the levels of devotions he is looking for from her. He intends and tries deliberately to destroy his wife's love for him, because it is not the one that he imagined (Wellworth, 1964: 115). I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us in the thirties and forties, when we were still kids. There aren't any good, brave causes left. If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus. No, there's nothing left for it, me boy, but to let yourself be butchered by the women (act iii:78). This quotation shows both political skepticism and personal frustration. It is both a comment on society and a way for Jimmy to show the churning within him, an anger that originates in his inability to communicate with others especially women as fully and meaningfully as he feels. It also reveals Jimmy's grudge for upper class, which is represented by his wife Alison, whom enlarges this grudge via her daily routine and her frozen feelings towards her husband.

The domesticity of the play makes it a milestone in the twentieth English theatre. It explores details of the married couple; their background, their education, their collapsed emotions and their struggle. The play is a mixture of two completely different ambiances: one is domestic about the affairs of a conjugal life and the other one is peculiar presented by Jimmy Porter, who represents and talks on behalf of the twentieth century generation. He creates his own world via his frustrated tirades, which are feedbacks of the sad past events and the harsh 14 circumstances of the present. They make a ring around him and that prevents others from approaching. So these tirades are results of

Jimmy's anger. In other words, his anger is uttered orally through his speech. Out of these tirades, Jimmy evacuates his anger and frustration and distributes them evenly on people and things around him and then he succeeds to change psychological anger into daily behavior via his tirades.

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Revisiting Indian Scriptures: A Study of Charu Sheel Singh's *Scripture on Stone*

MEENAKSHI VERMA & BINOD MISHRA

History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or is still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism.

(*Gerontion*, T.S Eliot)

The distinctive quality of scriptures has, since time immemorial, prompted thinkers and critics worldwide to examine and explore what the human race has scripted in the name of honour and identity, to settle some scores over others for varied reasons. If history reminds humankind of its re-iterative practices, it also enables the future offspring to be aware of its catastrophic effects. What happens today becomes history tomorrow. Hence, revisiting the historical records in the presence of a wise interpreter is to revisit the scriptures, since they explicitly draw lines between the right and the wrong for humans of all ages. The present paper attempts to remind the readers of our Indian scriptures, which though full of its chivalric achievements, is not devoid of its rough edges.

Indian literature is replete with its scriptural glories that inspire world literatures, allowing them to derive plenitude in everyday ethical practices. Since its inception, while Indian writing in English had maintained its dharma of educating the world, the second-generation creative writers seem to have shifted their loyalties and hurried towards cerebration as their themes just for instant praise and popularity. Thus, the celebration of souls and yearning for spiritualism as content or theme remained circumscribed only to a few poets and writers. Among such practitioners, the name of Late Charu Sheel Singh can be inscribed as an outstanding artist who, despite the indifference of academia and award-giving committees, proffered his life towards his vocation as a tireless traveller on the tracts of time.

A poet, critic, thinker, and yogi combined in one, Charu Sheel with an aim to awaken the coming generations of its ancient past, scripted many poetry collections soaked in Indian narrative tradition. The present paper based on his collection *Scripture on Stone* is an attempt to unearth the gems of knowledge suffused in his writings. It is a profoundly inquisitive collection that effectively revamps the readers' culturally and historically mutilated canonical, cultural, social beliefs. The collection comprehensively elucidates fundamental ideas about love, devotion, and courage, as exemplified by Indian scriptures and historical moments to educate the readers. While the collection has ten poems comprising historical figures and monuments, the writers of the present paper will confine their deliberation to a few of them.

This analytic paper discusses Singh's poems under these two inverse ideas: blooming consciousness and petrified consciousness, interchangeably addressing the theme of fruitful emergence with the pervasive notion of petrification¹ of human essences, ethics, and expressions forcefully regulated by the dyad: culture and history. These poems awaken the readers with the wisdom of George Santayana's words: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," who emphasises upon reason being a valued faculty. They also rejoice in the moments of victory when stones became scriptures, causing a wrinkle in time².

In his scholarly article, "Interpretation in History" (1973), Hayden White identifies that the historians try 'to clear up the epistemological status of historical representations and to establish their authority as explanations, rather than to study various types of interpretations met within historiography.' In his literature review, the scholar accounts the ideas of four thinkers G. W. F. Hegel, J. G. Droysen, Friedrich Nietzsche and Benedetto Croce. Of these, Hegel and Croce argue 'that poetry was a form of knowledge, indeed the basis of all knowledge (scientific, religious, and philosophical), and in their conviction that history, like other formalizations of poetic insight, was as much a "making" (an invention) as it was a "finding" of the facts that comprised the structure of its perception.' Though the idea is scholarly analysed by Hayden³, Charu Sheel's poetry collection is a cognitive reflection of what happens in our society as an extensive repetition of what happened in the past as he revisits Indian Scriptures through his poems. He is a "speculative philosopher of history," who attends to the need for a philosophical interpretation and actively engages in a didactic elucidation of historical events, providing century-appropriate insights ruled by the principle of logic. Thus, his 'reflection gathers experiences together and perceives their relative worth' (Santayana, 2)

In his valid interrogative tone, the poet investigates the charades of culture and history, focusing upon the hermeneutics of how the 'cumulative loss of such sensibility has, in turn, made us stones.'

The poems seem to suggest that *history's interiors are defunct and the mainstream discourses are manipulative versions of figures of representation whose noema and noetic consciousness did not really deserve the foregrounding and foreclosing into the folio pages of history.* (Foreword, *Scripture On Stone*, emphasis mine)

In this compendious collection, Prof. Singh constantly hammers at the fissures and fault-lines of our historically recorded and culturally informed interpretation of the scriptures. He breaks the hardened pseudo-epidermis of misinterpretations and oblivion to reveal the visceral truths of life. This attempt propels the readers to recognize the revolutionary impetus of exemplary moments from the Indian Scriptures, causing an implosion of their bloated beliefs, as is distinctly exemplified in “Ravidas” and “Shabari.”

Shabari was a tribal and
a shudra too who outsmarted
history piercing shafts
changing herself into a
galaxy of stardom nest. (SOS, 37-38; emphasis ours)

Thus, encouraging and ennobling ‘mankind to learn the lessons of magnanimity from ancient texts’ (Mishra, 2013), Charu Sheel specifically channelizes his ideas through the narratives of the ‘outcasts,’ who are the foeticidal consciousnesses of the society:

Shabari was the
composite fruit of society’s
collective being who wanted
an ushering but was uprooted
even before she could
bloom. (SOS, 33)

The poet through his poetic sweeps of imagination, compares Shabari with Wordsworth’s Lucy but finds the former devoid of the acceptance that she deserves. While the societal mores fail to recognize what is sacrosanct about ‘Shabari, a dalit and tribal, downcast lady with an inverted uphill,’ the god-incarnate Rama foresees her worth, as he desperately searches the grounds after the mysterious missing of Sita. The ‘agony of love’ and ‘the berries of tears’ unplug the sweetness of Shabari’s heart, longing for years, waiting for the vicissitudes of her and Rama. The poet doesn’t exaggerate when he writes: ‘Shabari and Rama are/ the swings of a pendulum where/what one sees, the other cannot see’ (37). Both Shabari and Rama notably contribute to each other’s life.

It is not without significance to observe that Shabari plays an instrumental role in showing Rama the Kishkindha ranges where Hanumana lives. Everyone familiar with the *Ramayana* cannot be oblivious to the endangering efforts of Hanumana in unearthing the traces of Sita confined in Ravana’s captivity. Rama assists her emergence out of her lapidified consciousness.

Rama's arrival did not
 evoke drum-beat but surely
 a cultural retreat for the
 deserted street spoke volumes
 that love could only devour
 and transcend into a locality
 with a new errand. Shabari
 could not compound the folded
 folios of her being as
 the epiphany had come
 even at the hermitage that
 was a slum. Shabari's
 meandering run went beyond
 the reaches of the sun for
 her God had arrived within
 the notoriety of the senses
 five. (SOS, 35)

Shabari, though a low caste discarded woman, deserves a sacred space, inviolable by any societal and religious dictums. Charu Sheel offers praises on her, though not without interrogating the anthropological dichotomies based on the colour of the skin. It is apt to quote the poet who says:

Valmiki the first poet
 And Shabari the lone poetess
 Of love were shudra incarnates;
 Kevat did not lag behind in
 The legacy that was majority. (SOS, Shabri, 38)

The poet also questions Tulsidas, who denigrated women folk and Dalits by describing them as 'good for clubbing and lynching. Tulsi's social vision, according to the poet, was 'a python's mouth' as compared to Shabari's 'liberating cacophony of tears.' Charu Sheel discovers a combination of contraries in Tulsi who, though converted his beloved's expurgations into an inspiration yet couldn't cleanse himself of his parochial treatment of women, attributing them to the tools of persecution.

Similarly, the poet further records his sympathy with Ravidas, a poet of Bhakti tradition, who suffered humiliations of all sorts albeit being steeped in spiritual yearnings and reformative views. Various controversies and confusions regarding his low-caste status could not block his pious prayers. His reverence to the holy Ganges is ultimately rewarded as the poet records in the following lines:

As he could
 not go to the Ganges
 Once he begged a brahmin
 to offer rice-chuckles

to the mother. Just when
 the Brahmin floated
 Raidas's name on his
 caricatured sliding tongue,
 Ganges have back a bangle
 of gold to be given to
 The uncouth Raidas. (SOS, 30-31)

The poet traces Raidas' lineage with Krishna and describes how Meera's search for a guru ended in her broken footwear later sewn by Ravidas, who promises to sew her being as well. The poet takes a dig at the much hallowed and privileged section of society to which, "Raidas would donate/footwears to brahmins/whose feet had brazen/bronzes crinkling as/ if under the floors of the sea." While the poet grows sympathetic towards the maltreatment meted out to Ravidas, he is also critical of the civilized race that heaps honour, not based on our responsible actions but our caste.

It is quite pertinent to mention that despite society's indifference to such saintly figures, their unfavourable socio-cultural positionality is a counteractant to their emergence. These revolutionary beings transcend the stagnations, immortalizing the moments with their audacious yet natural course of actions, supporting the inception of change. Charu Sheel's subtle word-play is nothing short of an encomium interspersed with myriad layers of meaning:

Religion
 is not a system but a living
 tissue that we must all encase
 and bathe in. Raidas could
 not be killed by the dalits
 of thought; humiliated though
 and vanquished ever, Raidas
 made history live forever. (SOS, 31)

The revolutionary moments, incepted by these relegates, also mark their liberation from their 'doldrum' collectively occasioned by 'the speedsters of culture who sold God on the markets.'

*Shabari became a scripture
 on the stony walls of her
 being that divinely moved
 in a million of years
 in the agony of love and
 the berries of tears. (SOS, 36; emphasis ours)*

The poet is one of those "true Indian poets who lament the death of Indianness by portraying the sunken eyes of Indian mountains, the flaccid flow of dirt and squalor through the Ganges, the deteriorating value systems and widening gaps between concocted class and caste considerations" (Mishra, 2013). The

Eklavya. This reminds the readers of the treacherous tradition still followed by people in power to manipulate and decimate the potentials of an exquisite individual just to preserve the hierarchy of excellence in agreement with the status quo, as did Dronacharya.

History again
became a harlot as Drona
begged for Eklavya's
arrowing thumb. (SOS, 45)

Thus, the poet 'wants to awaken the present-day readers of poetry to find meanings in the tropes left by our ancient heroes' (Mishra, 2013) and he adds to this corpus of knowledge by supplementing it with his cogitated interpretations. We might have been windows to the outside world yet cannot remain blind to the heinous acts committed by our savant sages, just to satisfy their bloated egos.

The poet further exposes the cultural lack by commenting on Eklavya's blind 'devotion' and 'submission beyond limits' that help execute Drona's perfidious action, a cruelty that echoes in 'Shahjahan's butchery of mason's hands.' The poet efficaciously lists the ominous effects of the self-centered actions of Dronacharya that diminished Eklavya as an individual and his familial stock.

She [the mother] shrank in petrified
doomsday while the father
became a statue of stone.
Eklavya did not know his
moorings, became a deaf and
dumb who would ever remain
a rootless crumb never hoping
to get back his thumb. (SOS, 47)

Even though, 'Familial bonds are not forms of expository commentaries; they are too sacred to be discussed even,' the wise poet should be credited for reflecting on how the myriad of events, chiselling an individual's persona, destiny, and life, affect their families:

Buddha's quest was Yashodhara
and Rahul's orphanage too;
will the history tell it and
answer a question or two? (SOS, 87)

In addition to these, Prof. Singh also comparatively instructs his readers on the idea of love, elevating its stature to be a means of unification. The poet argues that it 'is an alteration of *veebhatsa* and an overcoming of the compartmentalized shore' that seeks confluence of two souls and not a prodigal display at the cost of 'the labour narrative' resulting in cold emotionless marble minarets.

He [Shah Jahan] had murdered
 millions of Mumtaj's that
 could have grown into trillions
 of Tajs! (SOS, 54)

This critical inquiry reminds the readers of a famous Indian lyricist, according to whom, Shahjehan had decried 'the vanity of an emperor in using the wealth at his disposal to create a structure that will forever mock the love of ordinary people' (Manwani, 47).

Apart from appositely educating the readers of the stagnation and seldom stir of consciousness, Prof. Singh, who is widely known for his mystical poems, endeavours to encourage spiritualism among poetry lovers. In poems like "Gandhi" and "Buddha", we get glimpses of spirituality and attempts at yogic transcendence.

Energy caskets travel from the
 Sacral plexus above into
 the *manipura* and *vishudda*, these stages
 earmarked Gandhi's journey from
 the land of eternity into
 the devilish zone of ideas
 where he learnt the primary lessons
 tint shall chisel freedom out
 of slavery. (SOS, 58-59)

In the above lines, we observe how 'the verbal repertoire in which [the poet] couches the spiritual experience is post-modernist medium in which the images and symbols seem to be generating illusions of various kinds' (Mishra, 2007). It goes without saying that 'ultimately these images lead to the *tathagata*, which all of us should become.'

Gandhi's conch-shell body evolved
 into the thousand-petalled lotus⁴⁴ The activation of
Sahasrara chakra
 indicating the final emergence
 that was Indian idea of freedom. (SOS, 62)

Charu Sheel, in his search for spiritual values, also rues the loss that has become a part of history. In this regard, he is all praise for Gandhi, whose 'loin cloth' (57) and 'his half-clad dhoti mounted to Everest regions of the soul.' As Indians, we have failed to understand the philosophy of how the integrity of principles cannot be sacrificed merely for temporal gains. The poet is not oblivious to Gandhi's idea of the nation. Gandhi wanted to discourage the division and destruction of 'cultural bricolages' under masked religiosity. Thus, Prof. Singh inventively applies linguistic and grammatical illustrations to emphasise upon Gandhi's active contribution:

*Gandhi thought script to
be a noun which it
hardly was. All nouns are abstract
ideations of eternal time
in India, so the script could
not redeem them. Gandhi
made it a verb and that
was when his energy reached
ajna-cakra gravity of seasons.*

.....
*Gandhi is the script as well as
scripting, let us live fictions as
reality where treachery and
difference go a drifting. That
is Gandhi in a coconut shell-
an umbrella is an embryo
that augurs for the future well. (SOS, 61-63; emphasis ours)*

Gandhi, an apogee of truth and sacrifice, wrote the script and forced the alien forces to leave India forever 'was not killed/ but murdered by brutality within us. The petty political tornadoes 'that divided though into Allah and Ishwar' could not realize the *tathagata* that Gandhi was. Calling Gandhi, a quintessence of a script and scroll, the poet awakens the erring humankind to be reminded of the messiah's truth and renunciation forgotten amid machinations that discourage fructuous fiction sown in the seeds of time. The following lines reveal the poet's futuristic belief elevating Gandhi to the stature of our scriptural icon:

Nations may live, nations may die,
so too civilizations but Gandhis
are not born every now and then
like fictional romances that
cloud memory-gates for a while
disappearing then into
the airy nothings of the anti-heroics
of a day. (SOS, 62)

Conclusion

Thus, a serious reading of Charu Sheel Singh's *Scripture on Stone*, unplugs an interpretive cresset of wisdom in this ethically desiccated world of social ills to enlighten and recuperate the oblivious readers from the prevailing taboos all around us. A good number of redundant social, cultural, and political conundrums require correction and not coercions, from time to time. A poet's job in a society is not only to appeal to his readers' emotions alone but also to forewarn the civilized world against the impending dangers that can hamper the development of upcoming generations. Charus Sheel as a poet succeeds in

proving his point in two comprehensive steps. First, he delineates the problems in the cultural and historical exposition of the narrative identity of canonical heroes and philosophers and secondly, he subtly envelops the urgent message, to recognize, to restrain, and to rebel against the repression, immorality, and decadence in the form of caveats drawing from the spiritual and scriptural legacy of India. He triumphantly encourages his readers to revisit Indian scriptures and rectify the wrongdoings of the past in order to bring redemption for a civilized world order.

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Notes

- ¹ The process by which organisms turn to stones (ODS)
- ² *Wrinkle in Time* (1962) is a book by Madeleine L'Engle, which suggests how every individual is special. And how little actions and decisions can undo the past. Here the phrase is used to hint at the same. Raidas and Shabri are unique in their own way who bring about change.
- ³ Poetic and scientific [historical] insights are different.

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BOOK REVIEW

Alchemy of Love: Sexuality & the Spiritual Life. Edited by Mateus Soares de Azevedo. Taos, NM: Sophia Perennis, 2020, PP. 154.

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It is readily becoming apparent that ‘progressive’ attempts to sever the sacred from love and sexuality has led to calamitous consequences for human relationships. How has this happened? Needless to say, the eclipse of humanity’s integral connection to the Spirit has not occurred overnight or in a vacuum; the catalyst was the gradual secularization brought about by the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment; a development that is rapidly reaching its consummation.

The emergence of modern psychology, especially through the writings of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), grew out of this historical trajectory to which it remains faithful in its myopic worldview. Freud is often recognized as a precursor to the *sexual revolution* of the 1960s counter-culture, and it is well known that human sexuality held a central place in his thought. His view of *homo naturalis* is not that of a liberated human being but, rather, a caricature of fallen or *samsaric* humanity that has lost its connection to the Divine. Freud’s theories not only fueled the *Weltanschauung* of the modern world but have bequeathed to us a fragmented and inverted image of the human state. These ideas have become so ubiquitous in our profane *Zeitgeist* that they are barely questioned.

At first glimpse, human love, sexuality and spirituality might seem disparate to each other; however, in this timely anthology, these themes all converge and are shown to be inseparable. This is evidenced by the contrast between the flesh and the spirit that often epitomizes an unreflecting dualism; yet in metaphysics, human love and sexuality are spiritualized and therefore embody a nondual vision of life. The purpose of this anthology is to rediscover these profound and forgotten dimensions of physical love with reference to the universal and timeless wisdom of the perennial philosophy.

In what is a unique work, *Alchemy of Love* explores the metaphysical foundations of sexuality in a way that we rarely see these days. In it we find the central exponents of the perennial philosophy—such as Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998), Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984), Jean Hani (1917–2012) and William Stoddart (b. 1925)—displaying their perspicacious insights on this subject. We are also introduced to a newer generation of writers such as Mahmoud Bina, Alireza K. Ziarani and Mateus Soares de Azevedo, who are also grounded in the great spiritual traditions of the world.

According to metaphysics, sexuality has two main functions: procreation and the symbolic union of the two sexes. Erotic love includes the capacity to raise us, so to speak, above ourselves and beyond the narrow confines of the empirical ego. Through the erotic embrace between man and woman, as envisaged esoterically, our lost primordial unity can thereby be regained.

Due to humanity's fallen or *samsaric* consciousness, humanity today endeavors to find completion in various pursuits (including sex) but usually to no avail. In pursuing sexual ecstasy, we unknowingly seek a deeper wholeness, not realizing that it cannot be found in a merely carnal activity but only in recovering our lost androgynous state, which Plato so poignantly describes in *The Symposium*.

Our task is to realize what the masculine and feminine are called to be in principle so that we can live this archetypal reality through recognizing the Divine qualities in each sex. In the spiritual dark age in which we currently find ourselves, the lower dimensions of the soul overwhelmingly determine the formation of a false sense of personal identity. Our true self transcends the psychophysical order which, nevertheless, remains subsumed in the Spirit. We are reminded of that venerated passage in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* which states that what we truly seek in the other, whether male or female, is the Divine, which is none other than our own immanent, yet transpersonal, center:

It is not for the love of the husband that he is loved, but for love of *Atma* [the Self] which is in him; and it is not for love of the wife that she is loved, but for the love of *Atma* which is in her.... (p. 48)

What modern psychology does not recognize is that the primordial androgyne, or our fundamental human identity, cannot be restored by submitting to one's lower nature or vices or by doing away with traditional morality. The "science of the soul," or the perennial psychology as advocated in all religions, does not denigrate the human aspect of love and sexuality, nor does it take a prudish stance as is often mistakenly believed; rather, it views integral sexuality as the communion of human beings with spiritual reality. As Schuon states: "In primordial man, sexual ecstasy coincides with spiritual ecstasy, it transmits to man an experience of mystical union, a 'remembrance' of the divine Love of which human love is a distant reflection" (p. 7).

The erotic embrace symbolizes a consecrated act that is, as Schuon notes, "naturally supernatural." Within esoterism or the inner dimension of religion, noble pleasure is not associated with any kind of moral transgression, as this union is conducive to our remembrance of the Divine. What the religions regard as sinful is not sexual pleasure as such, but the selfish pursuit of pleasure without awareness of the sacred. In this sense, we can see how the love that is experienced between human beings is a remote and somewhat ambiguous reflection of Divine Love. Through the spiritual ecstasy that is shared in the mystical union of a man and a woman coming together, the evocation of such love can be powerfully awakened.

To ignore one of the two poles, or to confuse them, would be a fundamental subversion of the Divine order. These poles of cosmic manifestation are known in Hindu metaphysics as *purusha* and *prakriti* or, in Taoism, as *yin-yang*, the creative interplay of the masculine and feminine inherent in all phenomena. While each human being has a distinct sexual identity, this does not mean that male and female can be arbitrarily merged without reference to a transcendent principle, with a view to artificially recreating an androgynous state. Stoddart stresses that “The masculine and the feminine have their origin in God Himself” (p. 31), but also adds that “God is above and beyond sex: He is neither masculine nor feminine” (p. 38).

The traditional understanding of the androgyne confirms that, originally, a human being was neither male nor female, but comprised of both as an archetypal reality found *in divinis*—“There is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28) and “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 11:11) The Book of Genesis (1:27) states: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” The *Midrash* clarifies this as follows: “When the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the first man, He created him androgynous.” (Genesis Rabbah 8:1) The Divine pairing of male and female is also found in the Koran: “Glory to God, Who created in pairs all things” (36:36) and “We have created you in pairs.” (78:8)

Our essential humanity as *anthropos* has its origins in Spirit, prior to the ontological rupture that divided the sexes in the realm of duality. In the same way that our true self can never be lost, the primordial androgyne inherent in each one of us will always remain innate to our true sense of being.

The sapiential traditions, with their metaphysical approach to human sexuality, convey—in their own unique languages—the essence of love in its highest expression. Again, the masculine and feminine poles are integral to the manifestation of the cosmos. To return to our fundamental identity requires embracing these binaries, not suppressing them. As Hani reminds us: “The union of man and woman, when restored to its original integrity, provides the most common spiritual way of re-ascending to God.” (p. 126)

This anthology comprises a wonderful collection of illuminating essays by perennialist writers that address an often-misunderstood and contentious dimension of human nature. Those seeking a more profound vision of human sexuality will find here the immutable principles necessary to discern this mystery without, of course, exhausting it. What truly distinguishes this work is its ability to create new vistas in our understanding of eroticism as a means of partaking in spiritual reality.

“When you make the two one ... and if you make the masculine and feminine into one ... then you will enter the Kingdom.” *Gospel of Thomas* (on p. 114)

California, USA

POEMS

CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUBEY

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I Call You

I call you when the sun sets
and tides are low foaming
on the calm surface serene.
I call you when the moon
smiles on the waves to rise.
I call you when night is wrapped
in the minstrels of quietude
beckoning the sleeping sun..
I call you when crimson sun
jumps from its bed on the
crimson horizon like a ball
suffusing the edge with white light
heralding a new morning of hope..
I call you when birds sing in chorus
welcoming the dawn of the day
liberating from the night's cloak.
Come to flow with my spirit
making my day filled with juvenile joy
so that I can live my dying dreams
bathing in the elixir of your fragrance.
Come to sing with me unsung songs
that tell the tales of time unbound.
O' gentle spirit of hidden glory
come to me ,not to go but live
reigning the reins of my soul
unleashing the ecstasy of bliss.

Walls

I am not a wall that separates
But a bridge that connects-
two separated territories , two hearts.

I am a nation without boundaries and borders without lines open and inclusive.
 You can't draw my contours on map
 Nor can you confine me to man made lines
 of demarcation dividing geographically
 or politically for I am beyond what you call
 a state or territory defined by stringent lines.
 I stretch from end to end of the globe
 Encompassing races, ethnicity and whole
 host of humanity that knows only one language of love beyond confinement.

I arise -

Where warring heads melt into harmony.
 mystifying crumbling darkness of world.
 The suppression, suffocation sucking the air
 of freedom nails me to the Christ like cross
 Stealing my goodness from me with memory
 of asphyxiation of people without borders.
 You can wall me out, you can keep me on fringe but you cannot draw me
 into lines.

All walls are not home as all homes are not walled faces of freedom but mere
 rabbit-proof walls that know no borders.

I am a living spirit in every heart that connects one to one and one to many.
 Neither the Wall of China nor Berlin Wall
 could scuttle me down nor the waves of war.

I ushered out of burden of ages where boundaries melt into an ocean of
 humanity.

O' holy spirit of humanity let me awake in
 a land where boundaries cease into infinity.

Microbe

The invisible microbe strides
 attacking and demolishing the idols
 as helpless victims collapse with last
 drop of oil in senseless flame
 struggling against the killer waves.
 The cradle of joy and beauty
 the crown of all planets mother earth
 stands helpless crying for her children
 wiped out from her loving lap.
 We cry, curse and hurl cathartic jibes

on government, system and human follies.
 Some blame it on election, others on poor vision of government and policy makers
 They argue, analyse in heated debates
 like theater characters with no results.
 The poor and maimed are wrecked with
 fear and even the wisest lack conviction.
 The viral apocalypse. has crippled all
 Science, medicine and system defaced leaving everything to destiny.
 Birth without rituals, death without rites
 patients without oxygen counting every breath waiting to be lost in dark
 oblivion.
 Out of this nightmarish existence hope
 clings like an antidote to save humanity
 against this testing time like a ray
 that heals, and fills afflicted souls with
 another hope, to live, to reconstruct and
 living and loving for a better world.
 The world will neither end 'with bang or
 whimper' but relive with Shellyan dictum
 "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"
 Surely God will save the humanity against
 the ravages of time to live and smile
 in the spring of life.

GOPAL LAHIRI

Poet, Critic, Editor, and Translator (Kolkata)

Covid-19

Days are not same, nights are different.
 A strange world of quarantine is slowly
 strumming with silence,
 there is no paper, no blue ink-
 envelopes never arrive, inbox isn't loaded with emails
 it's time to live with the lonely shadows.
 The archipelago of hospitals empties sad memories,
 patients fighting for life with short breaths

trip letters in social distancing,
 no flowers, no relatives or friends
 a virus attacks inside in a different trajectory.
 never completely leaves the bones.

The first layer of darkness hides the melody of stars
 in alleys, in streets, in subways,
 not over the crumpled bodies of laundry.

rewind the scene of weaning the ventilators.

many dead mothers have left their smiles over the corridor
 on the margins of the white washed wall.

Form the undulations of courage and fear
 eyes stare at the distant light,
 lacing rivulets like vein in the hands,

the whispers are carrying alphabets of the dead planets
 lying beneath the disposable trough.
 there will be another universe to live for.

Seclusion

The setting sun gathers memories—
 glass windows put their words inside.

Nothing about car horns or signal light,

Silent cries drop ashes on the empty doorstep
 phone calls are full of valedictions.

Numbness cremates oursore lips
 and the pungent smell of the factories turn history now.

Morning prayers canoe on
 nature uplifts us, reassure us, beam our life
 from future.

Detachment

They stutter, they are in lock down,
 angry, grieved, pained.

A murmur brewing on the street, on the lane, on the alley

The deadly virus sips all prayers
fear is spreading ashes in silence.

They want to go back to their roots
in the thatched house, tree shades, hyacinth ponds, paddy fields
water birds flutter across the bridge

Never sleeps, they walk day and night
those migrant workers, their families, little children
unborn babies walk in the wombs,
There are ruptures, the families are buried by hunger
they walk miles, exhausted, starved, die on the road accident
blood on the asphalt, on the broken pavements, on the grass.

Their voices are muted,
asleep now, echoes calling them into the dreamland.

And every morning the death lists are out
we bolt more tightly our doors, our windows
we are numbed to the outside world.

New Order

There is a new order all around.
The sky is pouring out unknown stars
looking to be noticed, the world is in a shell
letterbox fill with sealed envelope.

The soft hum of the traffic wafts in,
sporadic rumbles of cars die,
phone calls are full of cries and blankness.

late night whispers have gone through
like a needle through a strand.

Absence of humans is sewed with sunrise colours
sparrows balance themselves on the skylight
sending pulsating signals of life.

the chalk scribbles are on the school gate
kittens are drawn on the shutters of the windows
a tree erupts in golden flowers,

new born babies are casting out in the womb
waking in new light.

Edges of life

There is a long pause.

They say we will return to life soon

No door no window no darkness,
clouds evanesce and light pours through the ventilators
brick walls awash in abuse.

The last lights accompany the victim to the edges of life,
soft words, sinister touches and strokes,
a smirk slips across your face.

Days are numbered, nights count hours and minutes,

There lies a solution in the blue,
another world is possible,
you can hear, it's breathing close.

Hope holds the other hand of the dying patient.

GAURI SHANKAR JHA

Retired Professor of English and Head, Govt. Colleges of Arunachal Pradesh

Yes, I am Back

I am with you,

Once again.

I am back,

After almost one hundred year or so.

With same zeal and enthu.

To annihilate,

One and all.

Man : how are you ?

Replete with all that you are not.

With the fluid sense: of being superb

A Conqueror: that you are not

Treasure of wisdom that you can never be.

A Failure: that you are all.

Don't boost : be calm and quiet.

I know you, and your companion.
 Your tools and techniques.
 That cannot treat any symptom.
 You mistook me: as cold and cough.
 My First Visit: you named it First Phase.
 My Second Visit: you named it Second Phase.
 How long will you name and count.
 I am endless with countless names.
 And your science is dumb and deaf.
 You are short of Vaccine, Medicine, Oxygen and Beds
 And all that you need most.
 What will you do then?
 And , mind it : I am not alone this time,
 With dreaded associates, I dance now,
 Of Fungus: Black, White and Yellow
 Of Cyclones: Amphon, Nisarga, Tauktae, Yaas.
 You've been trapped.
 Badly: in the network of your deeds and misdeeds.
 Your dos and donots.
 Yet you fail to concede?
 Yet you flutter?
 But, why?
 And how long : you will cheat yourself?
 Where will you go?
 There is no escape .
 Man: wait for another spells.
 My frequenting
 And your mindless response.
 How long it'll go ?
 No looser, no gainer. Will you listen now?
 All may stop and end .
 Yes, I won't go henceforth.
 I am to stay here forever,
 With you, and your follies.
 Let us compromise : be together
 For all the times to come.
 What to say ?
 Take care,
 And be safe ??

I am...

Yes, I am still the same,
 With my sane and insane,
 Words of wisdom
 Or, whatever you say.
 Cry aloud and think within.
 And, here I am,
 With self and all.
 Within and without,
 To known and unknown.
 Chasing along,
 The handles of clock.
 They say : Proceed
 And, I've to Follow.
 As a helpless child,
 With toys of letters,
 With words of wisdom.
 And here comes:
 The final Stop,
 Deep dark,
 Confused and shattered.
 Here I am:
 With nothing in hand : no, no, nothing.
 Yes, I am the same : an age old Man,
 I see what I am.
 I made what I am.
 And yet, it is : I am,
 I am, I am, I am.

SARBAJIT CHOWDHURY

Poet, author of Speaking from the "Autumn of My Life"

Regrets of Life

Some regrets never fade away,
 They keep haunting all the way.
 It bites the heart, pesters the soul,

It just can't stop your mind,
 All seems to be in hand,
 All yet not contented and yet not happy.
 Come the destiny with her slap,
 It thrusts you in the ground,
 It makes you commit mistake,
 It makes you take wrong decisions,
 So, you regret,
 Till passes the life's procession.
 You sit back and lament,
 Curse the hour and the influence,
 But nothing you can do affluent.
 All you can do is beg for forgiveness,
 Keep the fire burning in you,
 So, that none in future can wrong you,
 But regrets never fade away,
 It haunts all the way.

The Ultimate End

Every night I quiver in my dreams,
 The demons are unleashed,
 They walk around stealthily,
 Making thumping sounds heavily,
 I shake, and unheard goes the scream.
 The blackish smoke of insecurity,
 Stinking smell of failure hovers.
 I am made to feel like a broken entity,
 The days of my victory are over.
 I see, in the unconscious mind,
 The stripping of my dignity,
 That churns my heart, grinds my mind.
 I cry! Like an anxious baby,
 I search for that one hope of dependence,
 I crave for the guidance.
 This agents of fate and time,
 Comes today as a harbinger of my end.
 I am tied to the dust with helplessness,
 Yielding to the powerful goddess.

Love, I am Sworn to

The brightest sun has gone,
 The gloomiest dusk descends,
 Dances uncertainty to the tunes of vagueness,
 I look at the sky and wonder,
 The birds flying would reach to you?
 Make you aware of my love, care and warmth?
 I wonder you could know how I fidget
 Every time I am reminded you are not well,
 I feel weak on my knees, I feel all going away.
 My ray of hope extinguishing,
 All my happiness vanquishing.
 As my phone does not ring, the voice doesn't reach,
 I wish the story was written by me,
 I had control over each and every turn,
 I wish it was bit different my love.
 As all these traverses through my mind,
 I feel the chaos engulfing, grief overflowing,
 Sorrows beating my soul black and blue,
 You are my colour, my light,
 And with lack of your sweetest melody,
 My world, my life loses its hue.

SANTOSH KUMAR SONKER

Assistant Professor of English, IGNTU, Amarkantak, MP

Who am I?

Who am I?
 An Indian?
 A Hindu?
 A Scheduled Caste?
 A Scheduled Tribe?
 If an Indian I am,
 Why am I not given an adequate space
 In the syllabus
 Of schools, colleges, and universities?
 Why syllabuses are loaded

With main streams writers?
 Even in the academics and institutions
 Meant to develop us
 And disseminate information
 Of our culture, art and value system.
 Why am I not given
 Rights defined in the Constitution of India?
 Why am I discriminated
 Just because I was born in a particular caste
 Which I had no control over?
 Why am I punished till death
 No, even after death
 For crime which I have not committed?
 Why my simple voice is treated as a rebellion?
 Have I no right to speak?
 Why atrocities on us
 Do not stopped?
 Why I have to fight
 For what I deserve?
 If I am a Hindu,
 Why I am not treated equal
 To the socially recognized upper castes?
 Why do I not have places in temples as priests?
 Am I still a Shudra of Veda, of Smrities
 Untouchable, filthy, polluted, bereft of virtues
 Though I have acquired a degree of Doctor of Philosophy?
 Am I not an Indian and a Hindu?
 Who will reply?
 And when?

I Don't Bother

Call me a man of reserve category
 A Scheduled Caste
 A Hindi background person with no accent
 "Reckless", "Negligent", "Indisciplined"
 "A casteist" threatening in the name of Caste,
 As a Pakistani does in the name of Missile bomb,
 A terrorist,
 Anti-Hindu
 Or whatever you want

You may call
 And express your frustration.
 Allege me with thousands of false allegations,
 Lodge lakhs of complaints,
 Register various FIRs,
 Or do whatever you want,
 Your efforts will go vain;
 I'll not be discouraged.
 You may write my behaviour
 "Unbecoming", "immoral" and so on
 But I'll not be demotivated.
 I am intelligent enough
 To know your shrewdness,
 Your male fide intention,
 Hidden designs and ill will
 Against me;
 To guess your jealousy of my efficiency
 At the fast execution of my duties,
 Appreciation of the students,
 Publication of my books and papers,
 Engagement in creative writings,
 Popularity among villagers,
 Commitment to my society,
 My contacts in the universities of nation.
 Intolerable and indecent
 You'll find me
 For I unveil the curtain
 From the evils your forefathers committed
 And still you are doing.
 Don't worry,
 I have no fear of losing my job
 If you must be thinking of,
 For I got it free of cost
 On the basis of my merit and talent.
 I'll earn the best possible livelihood
 Even without job.
 I am committed to expose
 Your immorality
 Your character
 Your treachery
 Your forgery

Your castiest mentality
 And above all
 Your real face.
 So that my brother may
 Work freely without fear
 Of being trapped and insulted.
 Rays of sun I am;
 Do whatever you want to stop me;
 Say whatever you want to defame me;
 I don't bother.

R. K. SHARMA

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Corona Corroded Souls

Existential threat looms large on humanity
 with corona's virulence plaguing our destiny
 Human wisdom accumulated since creation
 seems challenged invoking forced isolation
 The best suffers worst among all the nations
 Zpalsy-faced, grief-stricken curse the dragons
 The undisputed mother of invited calamity
 whose material temptation devours morality
 Graveyards fall short for the umpteen dead
 where coffins are queued up for ultimate bed
 Beasts baffled and bewildered brave the roads
 birds fearlessly flutter and flaunt in the hordes
 Scientific acumen appears groping in the dark
 all pinning hopes on mighty merciful monarch
 Social distancing, quarantine abuzz the street
 imposing strict rules of how to meet and greet
 An unjust progress invites heavenly anguish
 where millions starve and a handful flourish
 West ordained life of eat, drink and be merry
 springs all that the East abhors and calls gory
 An ordeal is apparently unfolding on our race
 where taming the tyrant requires divine grace
 So, let us swear to make this land corona-free
 and pray to God to ensure our breath in glee.