

INDIAN
ENGLISH
LITERATURE

A NEW
PERSPECTIVE

GAJENDRA KUMAR

“Indian English literature: A New Perspective” is a Critical venture to scrutinize the creative urge and narrative art of Indian writers and poets. The book is carved out in its new get up by assimilating twenty papers besides a thorough Introduction churning out literary contours and Poetic nuances in modern theoretical perspective.

The present book offers perspectives on a number of contemporary writers. The essays expose the dimensions of modern/post-modern Indian novels and poetry. Dr. Gajendra Kumar has ably shown with a wealth of detailed evidence, how the Indian English novel and poetry has all along been motivated apart from the basic creative urge.

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Indian English Literature A New Perspective

This One



6947-Y0G-CJXD

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**Indian
English Literature
A New Perspective**

Gajendra Kumar

SARUP & SONS
NEW DELHI-110002

Published by

SARUP & SONS

4740/23, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj

New Delhi-110002

Ph. : 3281029, 3244664

Indian English Literature : A New Perspective

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Ist Edition : 2001

ISBN—81-7625-240-9

Printed in India

Published by Prabhat Kumar Sharma for Sarup & Sons, Laser Type-setting at Mayank Printers and Printed at Roshan Offset Press, Delhi.

Preface

The Indian English writers have been giving expression to their creative spirit in the choice and execution of narrative technique. Conscious efforts have been continually put in, mainly by our major poets and novelists, in shaping Indian writing in English into a fit vehicle to convey the essential creative urge, impact of the West and modern intellectual tradition of literary theory. The Indian writing in English has been successful in reflecting a faithful picture of the Indian narrative tradition, a picture coloured neither by an exaggerated sense of native attachment nor by unjustified censure. This is high time for further development, both in theorizing of narrative art and in the introduction of newer poetic framework. The future of Indian English literature is certainly promising in spite of attempts being made to discourage the use of English literature is certainly promising in spite of attempts being made to discourage the use of English in the name of 'Swadeshi'.

The Indian English writers and poets took to Indian writing in English under various influences. The novels of Anand, Narayan, Rao Tagore, Anita Desai and others did encourage the Indian writers to try their hands at this form. Apart from the ethical pull of all literary tradition in which the external aspect of reality has a secondary role, the Indian English writer is also faced with a unique socio-linguistic problem. He writes in English about those people who do not normally speak or think in English. The second problem

is that he himself is writing in a language that is not his own. Thus he has to overcome the difficulty of conveying through English the vast range of expressions and observations whose natural vehicle is an Indian language. He has to depict analytically the and quick spirit of Indian society by showing the individuals whose experience is rooted in the Indian culture and ethos.

I owe a great deal to many persons and institutions for the invaluable help they rendered to me in the preparation of this work. I am obliged to Prof, R.U. Sharma, Dept. of Chemistry; Prof. Birendra Narayan Yadav. Dept. of Hindi; Prof. Bameshwar Singh, Dept. of Political Science; Prof. Lal Babu Yadav, the Controller of Examinations of J.P. University. Chapra; Prof. Faridul Hasan, Dept. of Political science; Prof. Birendra Pd. Yadav, Dept. of Botany. Jagdam College. Chapra; Prof. S.M.R. Azam, Dept. of English and a host of teachers of Rajendra College, J.P. University, Chapra and Prof. S.N. Sinha, former Vice Chancellor, B.R.A. Bihar University, Mazaffarpur for their stimulus and encouragement. I too record my sense of gratitude to my uncle Sri Bindeshwari Pd. Yadav. I am grateful to reverend Prof.. Bhola Pd. Yadav, Dr. (Mrs.) Nirmala Yadav, Sri Radhakant Yadav, ex-M.L.A. and Dr. R.K. Yadav. 'Ravi', Member of Rajya Sabha without whose blessings this work was not feasible.

I cannot forget my friends and well wishers like Dr. Saryug Yadav, Prof. Uday Shankar Ojha, Prof. Arjun Kumar, Prof. Dr. Kumar Moti, Sri Bharat Bhushan, Sri Manoj Kumar, Dr. Kumar Chandradeep, Prof. Dilip Kr. 'Vimal'. Om Prakash Yadav, Sri Sudhanshu Sharma and others who were behind the progress of this work by their frequent enquiries. I am in special debt. to the colleagues and staff of the department of English, Rajendra College, Chapra. I am very much thankful to Rakesh, Shailendra, Amit, Vivekanand, Lalan, Shipra, Anamika, Dr. Abhilasha and Shubhangi.

I am thankful to my bosom Prof. Jayadip Sinha K. Dodiya and Mr. Prabhat Kumar Sharma, the proprietor of Sarup and Sons, for bringing out this publications elegantly and promptly. I must thank to Sri Prahlad Singh who painstakingly corrects and types my manuscripts. I want to express my regards to Prof. S.S. Prasad, Head of the University Dept. of English, Patna University, Patna; Dr. S.N. Prasad, Vice-Chancellor, J.P. University, Chapra; Prof. U.S. Rukhaiyar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, J.P. University, Chapra. I must acknowledge my gratitude to my wife Mrs. Chhaya Kumari, son Utkarsh and daughter Garima. Besides, I am deeply indebted to my father-in-law Sri Ram Rajya Prasad, former Deputy Managing Director, Land Development Bank, Patna, Bihar.

21st April, 2001

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Introduction

The beginning of English Education and Knowledge of English literature and Science through the medium of English language offered a fresh fillip to the growth and expansion of English in India. Throughout the world the Indian contribution has been acclaimed in the realm of world literature. In modern set up, the contribution of India has been basically through the Indian English literature and novelists are considered to be the forerunner in this respect. A sizeable number of novelists, on the literary horizon, have given vent to their creative urge in no other language than English and earned credulity to establish Indian English fiction as a prime force in the world fiction. Since the Thirties, the Indian novel written in English has become the trend making voices on the native soil, which spearhead the progressive ideas and experiments in the novel writing. At the same time, it has got a remarkable status and meaningful recognition in the complex body of Indian literature delving deep directly into Indian mind and heart which is denied to outside readers because of the language obstacles. In fact, it is by no means an irrelevant undertaking for a real lover of literature to venture an exploratory analysis of Indian English literature, in terms of the cultural values and the kaleidoscopic nature that have influenced them. Above all, the Indian English literature has been an outcome of change, it has also become the perennial source of the consciousness and conscience of that change. The vast orbit of assimilation and inclusion pertaining to Indian mode of

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temperament, culture and civilization has been reflected and projected in a set of thought and theory in such savant garde thinkers as those of Tagore and Nehru. Tagore's philosophy of universality which he applied and embodied in his artistic sensibility, has been imitated by Nehru in the doctrine of Panch-sheel, which can be interpreted as Indian historical and cultural extension. The contemporary objective situation in the Thirties was conducive to imaginative work because the creativity has been inextricably embedded with the national situation in general. In the Indian tradition of learning unlike the west. The creative soul neither merely craves for universal recognition nor hawks after personal and individual identity. The Indian English literature in general and the Indian English novel in particular made its debut in the Thirties. The growth and maturity of the Indian sensibility in modern times evinces a panoramic are and arena of probability and potentiality.

Tagore's literary acumen and insight as a creative soul is a subject of study and analysis. His creative output (including drama, short story, novel, poetry etc.) represents the adventures of the individual consciousness in pursuance of the universe. His poetry and novels are an experimental documentation with the higher and finer symbolism of the finite individuality of man in the channel of self-extension into the infinite, ineffable and immortal Truth of the cosmic purpose. Tagore perpetuates the Indian tradition of philosophy which stands for synthesis—a coherence of the sublime and energy meant for a mediating vision anchored in Beauty. No doubt, it is inevitably rooted in Truth and Goodness as well. Gandhi symbolizes the empirical verve and vigour of Truth and for Non-Violence as piety and Goodness and Sri Aurobindo finds Truth as productive of Good in terms of its own evolutionary supra-mental consciousness. Sri Aurobindo is not a pedagogue or an academic, nevertheless a poet and prophet, above all a critic of the new social and intellectual order. His thought—structure is certainly one of the massive and encyclopaedia products of the contemporary renaissance move-

ment in India. As a great synthesizer of the Eastern and Western moral, spiritual and aesthetic traditions Sri Aurobindo will be ranked among the towering personalities of the ages. To him, the supreme poetry is man's soul finding tongue where scholarship acquires a perfect resonance—Mantra the Real. Tagore too perceives his stance as intellectual mediation, which echoes as aesthetic Beauty and Bliss.

Some Indian English novelists have registered their protest against the negative exploration of the past in the hope of a brilliant present upon which a purpose-oriented future may be based and built. They have been regarded as chroniclers of social mobility and realism and their works have subsequently been pioneering and facts bearing and sometimes extending and amplifying into an unflattering, unyielding naturalistic art of exposure and exposition. Mulk Raj Anand has brought this taste and tendency to almost crude perfection in his novels, which are essentially novels of Experience. Anand and Bhatta-charya are commanded by the same social concern and commitment which has made the Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra chatterjee, believe that artist has a direct social obligation. An objective study of Indian English novels exposes that writers like Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya, K.S.Venkataramani and K.A. Abbas not simply share the tenets of social change but also the social commitment of Prem Chand and Saratchandra.

R.K.Narayan, as a leading novelist has risen to remarkable heights of artistic excellence because of the very multifaceted intensity of his Art—an Art whose self-effacing worth liberates itself into the realms of dignified grandeur free from the tyranny and triviality of common facts. He applies the devices and disciplines of Art to the run-away realities of life so as to infuse order out of chaos, and meaning out of Maya. Raja Rao explores a broader cosmopolitan canvas, and articulating life neither in time, nor in

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space, but providing them an epic design of their own magnificence and majesty in divinity. Raja Rao's handling of the past are both complexes, composite and cohesive. The intellectual absorption and imaginative proliferation of contemporary India's cultural synthesis constitute the innate substructures of the works of the four representative Indian English novelists—Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya. The sagacious streams of national mind as represented by Sri Aurobindo with his doctrine of spiritual evolution of Man, Mahatma Gandhi with his belief in the union of ethics and politics in the sanctum sanctora of Truth and Non-Violence and Tagore with his saintly vision for cosmic Man is the summon bonus of the Indian English novels.

A perusal of the contemporary novels deals with the writer's preoccupation with our tradition and the curious fascination of the readers in the novels that describe the antiquity, events and episodes of greater significance which receive wide repercussions and responses. Amitabh Ghosh's literary vision of history is not of the same pursuit as that of a historian, but this does not in any way abate its worth and wonder as historical fiction. Ghosh's novels point out that the novelist's preoccupation with history in his prime obsession. Indian English writers through Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Anita Desai, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy and Manju Kapur hold centre stage in the modern literary galaxy. They have earned national and international repute, fabulous royalties and achieved prestigious awards. It is 1993, a landmark when Indian English literature came to be associated with money power and luxury. It began with Vikram Seth's 'A Suitable Boy' which is a soothing and sonorous unison of 'money and imagination'. The publication of Arundhati Roy's 'The God small Things' is the latest and most welcome addition to the expanding body of Indian English fiction. It is fundamentally a novel by a woman, about a woman, observed by the analytical and perceptive mind of a woman. After the declaration of the Booker's award, it

has become the most talked about work of art in Indian English novel writing.

A worth mentioning progress at the turn of the century may be witnessed in the growth of popular literature writers like Khushwant Singh and Shobha De as today's statistics suggests, are the best selling writers. Like Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande, she concentrates on women's problems and gives a new approach to them. Her treatment of the contemporary urban woman's position and the challenges, she faces as not without significance.

Among the women novelists Kamala Markandaya deserves a special mention because she is gifted with extraordinary vision of life. In her novels, she depicts race conflicts, temperamental disparities, cultural conflicts and sexual person as factors working in the form of barriers of communication. As a writer, she has the practical experience of life in rural area as well as in urban area. Similarly an intimate study of Anita Desai's works reveals her struggle for female autonomy played out against the backdrop of the patriarchal cultural pattern. Her creative output can be analyzed as a self-conscious reaction to overwhelming masculinity of privileged dominant gender. Her profound intellectual maturity provides a literary landscape based on as the ideological and theoretical formulation for the understanding of society in general.

Indubitably, the new era belongs to the writers like Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Rajkamal Jha, Pankaj Mishra, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri who are emerging and growing as powerful and prominent writers deserving world wide appeal. While the new crops are indulged in making their footprints, the old writers too are busy with their noble missions, Anita Desai's 'Fasting, Feasting' has been judged as one of the finest contemporary novels of classical touch. She has been shortlisted

for the third time for the coveted Booker prize. In the nineties, Manju Kapur, a Delhi based, Miranda House teacher of English, has beautifully narrated the hitch and hesitation of Indian women in a joint family in 'male construct' society. Her debut novel 'Difficult daughters' won the commonwealth writers' Best first Book prize in 1999. The novel focuses larger issues of patriarchy, which denies women voice and liberty set around the time of partition. Fundamentally, she has projected the women of 1940s, when women had no voice to assert their rights.

The twentieth century under the charm and spell of colossus figures like Eliot and Yeats, gave a fresh turn to Indian English poetry. Sarojini Naidu, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo were the salutary geniuses of this era. Their poetry emits thrill and flux, permanence and authenticity, not simply because of their sense of language but because of their unified sensibility and exploration of their own tradition and heritage. Tagore makes his best effort to synthesize Indian mystical thought with the modern temperament of the west. He received the Noble Prize for his 'Gitanjali', a transcreated collection of love poems with religious and mystical overtones. At the outset, Sri Aurobindo contributed some tantalizing poems of patriotic and nationalistic tinge and tone and then came back upon Indian mysticism. His 'Savitri' has been acclaimed as a rare work of art in world literature, and ocean of spiritual vision expressed in an epic form.

In post-colonial era, the Indian English poetry took a serious note of Walt Whitman, Eliot, Ezra Pound and Bandelaire. Now, Indian English poetry is not standstill, dreary and imitative rather it has become innovative. The contemporary Indian English poetry finds its sustaining source and force both from self and society. Poets like Nissin Ezekiel, Jayant Mahapatra, Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan has got universal recognition. Truly, Kamala Das's English is a living Indian language—it voices her joys, her longings

and her hopes. She has, indeed, achieved what Raja Rao had set as a goal for Indian writers in English in his foreword to 'Kanthapura'. Kamala Das has been able to evolve a personal idiom, is a commendable task, indeed, and a landmark achievement in the field of Indian English poetry has been registered. The contemporary Indian English poets have infused new blood into their poetry by their innovative use of the diction and daring experiments with poetic modes. Jayanta Mahapatra's 'Relationship' Kamala Das's 'The Invitation', Nissin Ezekiel's 'Night of the scorpion', K.N. Darruwalla's 'Boat-Ride along the Ganga', A.K. Ramanujan's 'The Striders' and Arun Kolatkar's 'Jejuri' are praiseworthy pieces of Indian English poetry. It is delightful wonder that the Indian English poetry has achieved phenomenal paradigm and power both in volume and variety. The canvas and contour of Indian English verse is much larger and more varied today than it was ever before.

Today, Indian English literature has captivated the scholarly and critical attention in the Indian and foreign universities. It figures as a paper at the M.A. level in several universities in Indian and syllabi of Indian English literature are given in many American and commonwealth universities. The salutary development in the realm of Indian English literature is the growing interest of Indian English writers in the Indian literary and critical tradition. What finally establishes Indo-Anglian literature as an Indian literature, that is not just an overflow of English literature rather it is the feeling of Indian ness—in the selection of subject, in the texture of thought and display of sentiments and above all the creative use of language. It has become the chief concern of Indian English literature to promote an all India consciousness.

Validity of Linguistic Choice and Indo-Anglian Novel

In fact doubts concerning the very *raison d'etre* of Indo-Anglian novel is being raised even after it has been more than a century and a half old. Two decades ago a historian of Indian English literature has prophesied that Indian English writing is on the verge of decline “and has also predicted its lamentable demise,”¹ which will take place by the end of this century. In our *de facto* analysis the Indian literature in English has been flourishing since independence more exquisitely than it ever flourished before despite the fact that the dominant paradigm of Indian society is multilingualism. Indo-Anglian novel writing evinces the growth of not only modernist tendencies but also of a self-conscious attempt on the part of the novelists’ quest for identity and their art of a spirit of bilingualism and biculturalism. It can thus also be expected to make use of the sociolinguistic import of the pluricentricity of English by examining aspects of bilingual creativity in English from the perspective within a non-native tradition of the linguistic realization.

John Wain declares that “Indian English being a *linguafrance* lacks the finesse of nuance that makes literature possible. It is not a question of writing English like a native.”² Any way Indian writing in English is not a hot-house plant, as

Amresh Dutta would suggest. This is the opinion of the majority of the critics that the work of writers like Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitabh Ghosh and Vikram Seth has met European standards of excellence. Moreover, as everyone knows that there are no Indian standards of judging our writers in English. Thus, an American critic ward Morehouse rightly evaluates the creative output of Indo-Anglian novelists and suggests that “the novels as a literary form is a vital and significant part of the contemporary literary scene of India.”³

English is considered to be a language of intellection, commerce and governance in India today. It is certainly not the only language to be used for such purposes but it is one of the languages so used. English is clearly a language of the elite, confined for the most part to the university—educated. With a long tradition of linguistic diversity, in a land where multilingualism is an accepted fact of life it is rather difficult to have clear cut linguistic policy. P. Lal, a noted poet and critic in his critical inquiry rejects the critical commentary of Dom Moraes that “anybody who writes in English is part of English literature” and firmly asserts that the “idea of English writing by Indians being a part of the Indian literary spectrum was another of our basic beliefs.”⁴

It was natural that the English language should have played a pivotal role in the politically motivated structuring of the fields of knowledge. It is a known socio-linguistic phenomenon that the language variety of a politically dominant minority is treated as superior by the politically dominated majority. In his critical survey G.N. Devy finds new “kind of political framing of values that Indian literary sensibility had to pass through during the colonial period.”⁵

Thus it is quite natural to face the question like this. “Can our writings in English be every authentic?” In reply we have a long list

of magnificently impressive creations of the Indo-Anglian writers. By and large, the literature produced by Indian authors in English cannot avoid some sorts of artificiality whether it centres round non-Indian experience of Indian. To a remarkable extent, the Indian writer in English can be Indian only in a descriptive context. He can depict the scene, translate the conversation, recall the racial past. The timbre and tone of the writing, however, cannot possess authentic Indianness. Thus, "the failure of the Indian novelist in English to project the authentic Indian voice is due to the fact that English still remains divorced from the regional language."⁶

The another point which arrests our critical attention is that Allan sealy, Amitabh Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee have written a novel of European excellence but their appeal is confined to ivory tower. More apparently they do not have sense of commitment and belonging to the larger life of the country. On the other hand, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, G.V.Desani and R.K. Narayan have all these illuminating facets so they are very well-received. The English language in their work is interiorized and integrated with gesture, thought and feeling. Only an Indian could have written as they have written. It may be true that "many of the key words and images in which the Indian sensibility lies embedded may be found to be just untranslatable." (Amresh Dutta). But the sensibility that these words symbolize may nevertheless be conveyed justly, it does not have to be translated. Indianness is moreover, whole, manifest and palpable in the wit, wisdom, speech and action of life lived in Narayan's Malgudi. Pertaining to this Meenakshi Mukherjee evokes our critical quest through her logistic view:

"If I were to write a novel in Bengali I would not be called an Indian writer in Bengali, but simply a Bengali novelist, the epithet Bengali referring only to the language and not carrying any larger burden of culture, tradition or ethos. No one will write a doctoral dissertation on the Indianness of the Bengali

novel. But the issue of Indianness comes up with monotonous frequency in any discussion of novels written by Indians in English.”⁷

In Indian critical jargon academic criticism of Indo-Anglian novel has sometimes suffered due to the critic’s continuing obsession with the two words ‘Indian’ and ‘English’. But Venkat Swaminathan pursues different paths of the linguistic validity of Indo-Anglian novels. He finds the Indo-Anglian writers’ feet deeply rooted in India, writing of their experiences in India but “by choosing to write in English have uprooted themselves and their writings from their soil and have done less than due creative justice to the truth of their experiences.”⁸ But this is not true to the opinion of major Indo-Anglian writers. Sri Aurobindo contradicts the said view by expressing his feeling that “it is not true in all cases that one cannot write first class things in learnt language.”⁹ In the light of Sri Aurobindo’s view the opinion of Ashis Sanyal stands dimetrically opposite to him. To him it is extremely difficult to write creatively in a language in which the author cannot dream. In the same critical vein Ashis Nandy expresses his opinion but his contextual analysis is different from Sanyal. He says : “English is not my language. Though I have developed a taste for it, it was once forced upon me. Even now I often form my thoughts in my native Bengali and then translate when I have to put them down on paper.”¹⁰

But in world literature we come across numerous examples that a writer can explore his creative impulse more than his native tongue. The illustrious name of Joseph Conrad, a Polish writer is obvious. He learnt English at the age of twenty six and proved himself a landmark in the field of English writing. In his critical introspection he says, “If I had not written in English, I would not have written at all.”¹¹ Vladimir Nabokov, another luminary, in the field of novel writing contributed eight novels in Russian, turned to English at the age of forty and wrote eight novels in this language

including 'Lolita'. In another case, Michael Madhusudan Dutt wanted to be an English writer like Wordsworth or Shelley and later on he switched over to Bengali. By the time Michael Madhusudan Dutt decided to switch over to Bengali, he had already acquired the rare ability to write English acceptable to the English speaking people of Europe. He was of the opinion that today English literature did not require to have another Wordsworth or Shelley rather we need to have Wordsworth or Shelley in Bengali. Wole Soyinka a Nobel Prize winning Nigerian poet and play-wright is considered to be the first African poet 'to develop an elegant and good humoured style' has excelled in a language which is totally different from his mother tongue. Thus whatever Sachchidananda Vatsyayan, a modern Hindi writer says, 'a second class brother' and 'a poor relation' cannot be justified.

Some of the recurrent arguments of the regional language writers against the Indo-English writers that they are shallow, self-inflated, alienated from the people or have a big eye on the dollar pickings have nothing to do with the language at all. And if Indian literature in English has not yet produced its Melville, Henry James, George Eliot, Joyce or Lawrence, the same is equally true of modern Indian literature as a whole. Khuswant Singh suggests that the works of our great novelists Bankim, Sarat Chandra and Premchand make indifferent reading in English and do not measure upto the Russian masters like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Gorky. Of course this is a matter of opinion. Mulk Raj Anand puts some of the novels of Tagore and Saratchandra in 'World Class'.

This is the sole-motivation even in Raja Rao's introduction to 'Kanthapura' where he single-handedly sets the linguistic agenda for Indian English fiction. In his coup d'etat, Rao says that the task is to "convey in a language not one's own a spirit that is one's own." He goes on to compare English to Sanskrit and Persian.

He is not unaware of the relations of power between languages. He is aware of the hegemonic nature of the language he has chosen to write in but he has decided to subvert the language—to pollinate it with Indian narrative/speech strategies and Indian speech rhythms. In the post modernist analysis language constitutes, rather than reflects the world and that knowledge is always distorted by language. Under the pressure of Derrida's arguments, and of Lacan's psychoanalysis "which sees the subject as constructed in language which is largely other-determined, that is determined with in and constituted by language."¹²

In case of Mulk Raj Anand it is apparent that his Punjabi-English is the result of this deliberate strategy to safeguard his truth, his examinations of class and caste conflicts which were seemingly untouched by the colonial context. Thus, there is a consistent attempt to remould English to appropriate the colonial space. Meenakshi Mukherjee finds that "most Indo-Anglian novelists are constantly aiming at an Indianness bereft of temporal and spatial values. The future of Indo-Anglian fiction seems to lie in the direction of further authenticity through exploiting the particular, local and regional reality to find all-India themes."¹³

Recently in a question, "why he did not attempt writing in Hindi?" Vikram Seth replied that "he did not have such in-depth knowledge of the language to dabble in novels and poetry."¹⁴ Whatever may be the politicking of language but the question of language is one involving the basic right of the creative artist to express himself through whatever language she/he likes. If Arundhati Roy would have opted another linguistic medium for her creative expression perhaps modern world would not have known her. This is because of her befitting aptitude she earned world wide recognition. Jason Cowley, a critic and one of the judges of 1997 Booker prize on the selection of Arundhati Roy's. "The God of

Small Things” gives a critical plea regarding its form and language. He says, “It was rather her verbal exuberance almost alone among the 106 entries Roy has her own voice, her own signature.”¹⁵ Thus it is quite natural for Arthur.J. Pais to evaluate her in high sounding words. He expresses his remark that, “she has built a pedestal from which future Indian writers can scan the wide horizon of English literature.”¹⁶

How can a writer use a language creatively when all around him another language is being spoken and when the creative centres of the language are thousands of miles away? Jyoti Datta compared, “ the Indo-English writers to caged birds which according to some information he discovered in Whittaker’s Almanack, never attain the full range of sounds of the wild songster.”¹⁷ But in case of Arundhati Roy and Vikram Seth, Jyoti Datta does not stand true to the fact. Though Roy and Seth achieved excellence regarding publicity, pelf and prize but do Narayan, Anand and Rao stand inferior to them? This is the basic principle of critical methodology that the deciding factor which produces a great work is not the language but the writer. In an interesting note we find that L.S.Ramamirthan, a contemporary don in Tamil started writing in English but soon enough switched over to Tamil. What he has done in Tamil can never be done in English. He may not be anywhere near a Khuswant Singh or R.K.Narayan in fame and pelf. But he is of the class of Kafka or Borges, which he would not have been if he continued in English. But we must be thankful to all these pioneers who opened up new avenues, whatever might have been their motivations and achievements. This has brought forth after so many decades the likes of Bharti Mukherjee with a creative validity an artistic *raison d’ etre* for choosing to express in English. Who know a Conrad may be born in the future?

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Untouchable : A Manifesto of Indian Socio-Political Realism

‘Untouchable’, a tour de force, is basically a tragic drama of the individual caught in the net of the age-old caste system. Mulk Raj Anand, a doyen of Indian English Literature, through a gallery of characters creates here a deep and dense web of actualities and eventualities. His created cosmos in the novel bears a direct resemblance to the actual one. As a matter of fact, the whole novel is a series of graphic and moving scenes with the hero as the central focus. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly examines the “photographic fidelity that convinces at once, though it overwhelms us by its cumulative ferocity of detail.”¹

‘Untouchable’, a creative debut, burst forth on the literary horizon in 1935 present the most comprehensive and logistic outlook on the problem of untouchability. Anand’s daring effort of choosing the Dalit as a hero covers the terra incognita for introducing “into creative narrative.... whole new peoples who have seldom entered the realms of literature of India.”² the novel came up when the untouchables had emerged as a potent political force and Gandhi were trying to win over them. This novel came into being after a meaningful discourse of Anand with Gandhi at the sabarmati Ashram and also with a literary support of E.M. Forster. In his critical scrutiny of the novel

Forster writes:

“Untouchable could only have been written by an Indian and by an Indian who observed from the outside. No European, however sympathetic, could have created the character of Bakha, because he would not have known enough about his troubles. And no untouchable could have written the book, because he would have been involved in indignation and self-pity. Mr. Anand stands in the ideal position... he has just the right mixture of insight and detachment and the fact that he has come to fiction through philosophy has given him depth.”³

Mulk Raj Anand is profoundly influenced by the western thinkers and theoreticians like Rousseau, Gogol, Tolstoy and Gorky and he himself attributes his choice of an untouchable to them. He very candidly argues: “...most Indian writers... like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ratannath Sarshar and Rabindranath Tagore, had not accepted in their Novels, that even the so called lowest dregs of humanity living in utmost poverty, squalor and degradation could become heroes of fiction. I did not then know the work of Premchand.”⁴

Anand because of his indefinable passion for Gandhi visited his Ashram at Sabarmati and himself cleaned latrines. This proved to be instrumental in cultivating the ides of work as worship and imbibed an integral attitude for all labour as a tool of creativity. No creative writer can do justice with his people without genuine feeling and fervour. He rightly explores his views :

“.... I was myself somewhat transformed from the Bloomsbury intellectual, which I became in London to a more emphatically self-conscious Indian.”⁵

Anand had truly shared the feelings of the untouchables. In

the psycho-analytical term it can be viewed that many conscious and unconscious forces seem to have been operating. The novelist experiments like the relentless search of Joyce and Lawrence in the novel for some meaning in life. C. D. Narasimhaiah in his critical survey remarks, "Bakha Fights to seek his identity. Anand suggests it in the choice of his incisive title without the definite article."⁶ The struggle of untouchables during the 30's remarkably got a momentum for communal identity. Anand is fully aware of this development and Bakha individually becomes a type. His thought towards untouchable crystallizes when Bakha appears as a hero in the novel. The novelist sharply reacts against the age-old concept of caste which symbolizes in-human classification of the people of which Bakha becomes an innocent prey. Prof. S. S. Prasad rightly analyses the contemporary socio-political reality in his critical framework:

"Ambedkar's leadership threatened to break the untouchables way as a separate force and further underlined the political necessity of winning their confidence. Western egalitarian ideologies had also been at work but the political dimension of the idea of a fair deal to the Harijan had an urgency that could not be ignored."⁷

The modus operandi adopted for the presentation of Bakha's consciousness comprehends a sociological problem both realistically and convincingly. A detailed and in-depth analysis of this problem with a galaxy of characters and a wide spectrum would have blighted the effect and blurred the focus. Strategically the choice of a day in Bakha's life provides the novel its unity, integrity and harmony of classical antiquity of which Forster takes special note. The action consists one day and takes place in a contracted and confined area. This simple but straight forward form is the outcome of Anand's acute awareness of an untouchable's plight and has enriched him in delving deep into the heart of the

subject to purge it. "Anand had depicted a rather different landscape of grim poverty, urban callousness and rigid social hierarchy."⁸ Naomi Mitchison rightly noted how Anand dared to write without any romantic fervour.

Bakha is a latrine cleaner as he is born into the family of Lakha, the Jemadar of Sweepers. His power and place in society are determined not by his ability but ipso facto of his birth in a particular caste of untouchables, which happens to be the lowest of the land. In fact, his attachment with British soldiers has awakened him to a consciousness of new realities. V.G. Kiernan is of the opinion that Tommies "were in a rough way much friendlier than his own high-caste countrymen."⁹ Because of this turning movement Bakha come to identify his individuality and shows his mind and make-up different from fellow caste-men. The contradiction between his existing condition and new awakening generates a cathartic rise to the action of the novel. This sort of change is capitalizing the nature and character of the society and also the growth and maturity of Bakha while he is not knowing that he has become both the object and the instrument of this evolutionary process.

Bakha does not seem to be a carbon copy of Stephen Daedalus of Joyce's, "Portrait of the Artist as a youngman" and "Ulysses" regarding the choice of self-imposed exile. He did not get any aesthetic and moral stimulation in lack of educational orientation. "Nor does he even remotely resemble a Byronic hero, a Romantic demon-lover, or a shelleyan rebel."¹⁰ Anand's mental or moral construct does not permit him to ignore or gloss over the burning social facts. "His concern is to prove the need for reform in order to achieve a real social amelioration, controlling the mechanistic operation of the material causes that determine the human destiny."¹¹ Anand is a Great realist and naturalist like Zola, Balzac and Flaubert and exposes the social

evil and enigma. In fact, naturalist's leit - motif is society and not the individual who is considered to be a typical product of his particular environment.

The elementary stage of Bakha's feeling is traced in the outcaste's colony situated in the outskirts of the town Nagar. Anand artistically makes a point, which matters by creating uncongenial atmosphere for the existence of human being. Theoretically, the uncongeniality of the atmosphere is the sensitive response of the hero and not of the novelist. The book begins with a lively delineation :

“The outcaste's colony was a group of mud-walled houses that.... And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that Lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which Lay within it, made it an 'uncongenial place to live in.'” (P.1)

Bakha's character is different in the sense that he can think for himself though he is a commoner. There is a great possibility of his promotion as he comes in contact with a force which symbolizing the disintegration of the orthodox, feudal structure of Indian polity. Not only the British 'Tommy' but also of the Indian soldiers manifest their liberalism in their treatment of the untouchables. Hence Bakha is 'caught by the glamour of the white man's life while his castemen were content with their lot. Ironically the army was generating a new wave which may be jeopardizing for the colonial rulers. Bakha's sense of understanding is aroused or accentuated by grimly and gloomy realistic advice of his father, “You should try and get to know them. You have got to work for them all your life, my son, after I die. His conventional father suggests him, “Schools were meant for the babus, not for the lowly sweepers.

Bakha finds himself alone, lost and deserted who is rescued

by a Muslim tohgawallah. Anand's creative cosmos is similar to Dicken's in the realm of oppression and suppression inflicted on the young. In his quest for identity he seeks the sympathy of the Muslim smoker and the tohgawallah, who are also known as outcastes in the eyes of Hindus. Bakha's blazing and bubbling verve and vigour got a deadly blow though it is simply unthinkable for him to touch others. "A sharp, clear slap brings him back to ground reality. Bakha is fascinated by the snake image under a banyan tree. He seems to be inquisitive by watching the crowd to the temple and asks, "What have these people come here to worship.?" And decides, "I shall go and look" but now, "realized that an untouchable going into a temple polluted it past purification. Here, Anand raises the question of temple-entry for the Harijan and Juxtaposes the naïve and spontaneous urge for devotion on the part of Bakha with the hypocrisy of the priest. "You people have only been polluted from a distance", he says, "I have been defiled by contact". Sohini, Bakha's sister becomes the object of the priest's lust. Being a Dalit she becomes the first recipient of Pandit Kalinath's generosity, as she seems to satisfy his "waves of amorousness". He tries to malign her to come and clean the courtyard of his house at the temple. On her arrival he holds her by her breasts when she bends in the lavatory of his house. Out of anger she screams he comes out shouting that, "he had been defiled." The situation is poignant enough to arouse a sense of disgust. Bakha becomes uncontrollable and wants to murder the priest.

In the psychological framework Bakha's love for Sohini is a mixture of both brother and husband. "Socially and intellectually Bakha is still primitive and the priest symbolizes the upper-class hypocritical pretense of sanctity which can only distinguish between sister and wife."¹² the temple episode is well woven into the novel's texture as an ironic situation. Bakha keeps a tender feeling for Ram Charan's sister and feels the urge to embrace and ravish her but

all the times he is imbued with a sense of values. The novel aptly deals with the sense of urgency and has a decorum of subtle logical relation between all the different and varied shades of experience. Anand enables his protagonist think, act, doubt, love and resent and he gives him honour and dignity. This is moreover a clash between the old and the young, tradition and novelty, orthodoxy and rationalism pointing towards the crust of the novel. M.E. Derret praises, “the analysis of the states of mind of the young boy overwhelmed by that rare thing, Kindness, “and comments, “The author’s identity with his character seems complete, his humanity communicates itself.”¹³ Jack Lindsay suggests that, “he has rediscovered the Indian epical tale in terms of the contemporary struggle.”¹⁴

In the contours of creative writing Anand emerges as an ideologue abreast with crosscurrents of ideas on the subject. So, in his topsy-turvy socio-cultural fictive set up Bakha can embrace conversion but it is not expected from him because of his revolutionary gusto. He rejects conversion and he too rejects Gandhi though he is overwhelmed by the genuine feeling of Gandhi for the down trodden and Dalit. Now, there remains a third option, which is enunciated by the editor-poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar. It necessitates the dynamic introduction of the flush system to emancipate the sweepers of the “stigma of untouchability” and assists them to achieve the “dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society. Saros Cowasjee rightly comments:

“... Bakha is too much under the Mahatma’s spell to listen to anyone. But the mention of a ‘machine which clears, dung’ and which would enable a sweeper to change his profession so that he would no longer be thought of as an untouchable grips his attention. It also catches his fancy.”¹⁵

A dejected and disappointed Bakha is observed by colonel Hutchinson of the Salvation Army who explores Jesus Christ to Bakha and tries to convert him. But he is disillusioned by the Colonel's wife who chides her husband for "messing about with all those dirty bhangis and chamars. Bakha how came to realize the social snobbery which has too distorted christianity.

The Summum bonum of the novel is that it gives a new vent to the social realism as the editor-poet Sarshar reacts to Bashir's naïve and snobbish intellectualism. He doubts the treatment of British Indian Penal code, which has broken down the legal and sociological bases of caste. The clash of ideologies represented by Bashir and Sarshar carves out the centrality of the novel. Both are modern but they represent two levels of consciousness in new era. Being a snob Bashir represents uninvolved intellectualism while Sarshar combines scientific humanism with involved political consciousness committed to action. No doubt, Bakha can not catch this fancy of intellectualism but he shows his preference for the machine. In "The Road" Anand shows the road as an agent of social change. Here, Anand makes it transparent regarding his preference for Jawahar Lal Nehru that Gandhi which is not properly pursued by Kai Nicholson who finds that Anand's writings have been "continued in the vein of the Gandhian age."¹⁶ The Gandhian set up is idealistic but Bakha's adolescent impression of the machine symbolizes the new mode of production and set of new values for the eradication of untouchability.

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R.K. Narayan's 'The Guide' : A Search for Socio-Cultural Crisis

R.K. Narayan is one of the pioneering motivators and moulders of Indian aesthetic sensibility, reality and psychology in the realm of the traditional and national narratology. His creative universe rotates on a psychological axis and time chisels the growth and maturity of the characters while the society remains melodramatic, tragicomic and telescoped into a local, parochial dimension. The novelist's sense of narration is replete with objectivity, a quaint and curious sense of humour and irony and he keeps his finger on the anomalies and angularities of his characters with a particular point of view. His humour is overtly discernible not simply in the conception and portrayal of eccentric characters but also in description and dialogue. His humour is aptly woven into the texture of his prose. Like Defoe and Dickens. The novelist appears to be far away from the action which he narrates. Technically and Structurally narratology differs from individual to individual but most of the fiction authors, "betray their opinion on the characters and situations and—in as much as every novel is an extended metaphor of the author's view of life on the life itself. They do so by the very choice of the characters they write about, the thoughts and feelings they give them, and the behaviour and motives they attribute to them."¹

'The Guide' has been scrutinised as the story of the Railway Raju, a guide metamorphosed into a yogi by the pull and pressure of the circumstances. The novel exemplifies and typifies Indian literary nuances with a touch of taboos and values—constituting the crux of national sensibility. The leitmotif of the story justifies the worth of the maxim, "as you sow, so shall you reap," in a cathartic mode. In a Shakespearean orbit suffering becomes a kind of payment for spiritual health and honour. Indian cultural heritage does not provide any omission and commission to the individuals for their deeds or misdeeds. 'The Guide' offers a new creative contour of the conventional imagination as it acts upon the individual conscience within the stipulated time. In the certain schema of the literary experience, the novelist unlocks to the reader a phenomenal pattern of the archetypal images of man embedded in the sociological resurgence. As a matter of fact, Narayan's account of his inner and in-depth postmortem of life is not merely innate, intensive and ethical but social and psychological. Raju appears to be the psychological projection of the typical individual in Indian social set up. It is worth-while to evaluate the particular pattern which Narayan employs in exploring the societal consciousness by means of his universal vision, in the social behavioural pattern, Raju is critical of the age-old institutional values, albeit he himself is deeply rooted in the family tradition. He revolts but returns. Rosie's caste affiliation is attacked by the general people as a 'public woman' but Raju negates the prevalent mode of thinking and asserts that Rosie's caste is 'the noblest caste on earth'. Time is changed and continuously changing. Now, there exists no caste, class or creed. Marco too demonstrates his modesty and embraces Rosie as his wife. In his sociological scrutiny, William Walsh observes :

"Preoccupation is with the middle class, a relatively small part of an agricultural civilization and the most conscious and anxious part of the population."²

Narayan's major characters belong to the middle class set up who try to adapt themselves to the Kaleidoscopic conditions of society. This tinge of class commitment is rightly reflected in *The Financial Expert* when Margayya loiters around the goddess of riches, getting involved in various rituals and hobnobbing with the pseudo-sociologists like Dr. Pal. Likewise, Raju in *The Guide* is attached more with money and sex than with Rosie's passion. The national intellectual's predicament is wonderfully focused in Narayan's creativity. Northrop Frye catches the vision through his critical camera and argues:

"It shows a concern over the situation of man in society, his place in the Universe and his ultimate destiny. The humanities and social sciences show a similar concern, but literature does this through an intense vision, Literature is not detached but concerned. It deals with what is there in terms of what man wants and does not want."³

Raju pinpoints his attention that Marco deserves hate and Rosie commands Kudos as a beautiful snake girl with the potentialities of the excellent artist of the modern era. Marco and Rosie are ill-matched couple, truly Indian inspite of their pro-west names. Rosie because of her confinements in between hotel and peak House Forest Bungalow on the Mempi hills begins to generate her aversion towards her scholarly husband. Her tastes and hobbies are morbid to Marco. Marco's passion for ruin collection brings boredom for both Raju and Rosie. Marco's architectural fascination culminates into the completion of his thesis on 'The Cultural History of south India.' Marco's unflinching faith in Rosie and Raju is soon deserted. Out of utter shock, he leaves his wife, criticising Rosie for her 'street acropatics'. Being an offspring of a devadasi, Rosia could not dissociate herself from the age-old tradition. She presents herself for the sake of God as his mistress. Though she is well trained

in her family legacy, she does her M.A. in Economics so her mother expects honourable life for her. Virtually Marco and Rosie does not succeed in their conjugal life as they stand poles apart in their behaviour and character. Even in malgudi trip which is simply meant for research project, Rosie does not pay any heed, rather she finds exuberance and exaltation in dancing. She tries to excel herself in Bharat Natyam. She seeks warmth, love from Marco. Marco lacks sexually as well as mentally. Being a hard hearted man, he gets excitement from cold stone wall more than a living body of a beautiful woman. Marco once says to Raju, "If a man has to have peace of mind it is best that he forget the fair sex." Their difference in attitude is being expressed by Rosie as "when we are all alone and start talking, we argue and quarrel over everything. We don't argue on most matters, and then he leaves me alone and comes back and we are all right, that's all."

Nevertheless Rosie is a real artist who wants to enjoy every moment of her life. Everything attracts her to live intensely. She accentuates her spirit while she stays in the peak house on the Mempi Hills. There she acts like a child with pleasure and Marco sits idle having no taste. All the artists demand admiration—a passionate understanding of his/her creation. Rosie relishes the act of dancing. The cold and dry response of Marco makes her life pitiable. Out of disgust she looks for outlet and advent of Raju fills her urge. Raju being an intelligent and shrewd understands the rift between Marco and Rosie. He wins her confidence when he carries her to show the dance of cobra. Raju gets a noticeable thing when he finds that Rosie begins to dance with the cobra. She receives what she does not receive from Marco. This love attachment leads to her separation from her husband. She is overwhelmed by the presence of Raju and thinks that her dreams are going to be translated into reality. The novelist catches the full bloom of her joy in the sonorous portrayal. "She brightened up.

Her eyes lit up with a new fervour at the mention of dancing. So, I sat up with her, helping her to day-dream. I found out the clue to her affection and utilised it to the utmost. Her art and her husband could find a place in her thoughts at the same time; one drove the other out.”

But her disillusionment come to the forefront when she realized Raju exploiting her art for his material prosperity. Raju is devoid of the feeling and fervour of an artist and he shows his shabby treatment by invading the ‘inner holy’ of the heart of Rosie. Rosie converts into Naline for more fame and recognition, because her new name sounds Indian and sonorous to the ears. The undue and busy schedule consumes her spirit. She conveys her miserable condition to Raju, “I feel like one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs, or a performing monkey.” Raju out of the fear of missing Rosie commits blunder of forging Nalini’s signature in connection with Marco’s despatch of Rosie’s jewellery. Actually, there comes the end of the world of make believe and false existence. Despite Rosie’s best effort for the defence of Raju, he is failed for two years. Rosie did not visualise any basic difference between Raju and Marco. One sabotaged her physically and emotionally while the other tortured her spiritually. To Rosie, art is meant for spiritual elevation. Both Raju and Marco proved their mettle in negative gesture. For both of them, woman is nothing but a commodity for their self and sexploitation. Rosie is more sinned against than sinning. Rosie is more sinned against than sinning. Rosie extols herself as the representative of the noble institution of the great national heritage.

The novelist’s projection and portrayal of Rosie’s character bears a comparative account with Vimala Raina’s ‘Raj Nartaki’ or the court dancer in Ambapali having the honour of ‘Nagar Vadhu’ Janapath Kalyani Devi who ultimately accepts Buddhism; ordained by Baddha Himself. “This is more than a mere parallel

because Rosie belongs to the same tradition of Devadasis, dedicated to the worship of God. Ambapali's renunciation of the palatial aristocracy by following the Buddhist path of virtue, and Rosie's final retirement in Madras in order to rededicate herself to the practice and propagation of the Art of Bharat Natyas, the traditional classical dance form, are born out of the same spiritual motivation."⁴

Rosie marries Marco because the matrimonial advertisement of Marco gives a sense of coming prosperous life with promising intellectual. So, she relinquishes the family tradition for the stability of the family life. In case of Rosie art has been made ancillary by Raju for the self aggrandisement. Rosie comes to realize that she has committed sin—that is adultery and she is destined for her purgation even at the cost of art. Her resolution at last, irritates Marco who does not come to know that it is due to his apathy towards conjugal liability that has pushed Rosie down into the fist of Raju. In her artistic gallery of native genius, Rosie has been elevated as a star. Rosie is, now, self-fulfilled in the very classical fashion. She tries to be an exponent of 'Natya Shastra of Bharata' by learning Sanskrit. She remains detached and unconcerned about the monetary affair of her performance. She praises Marco's intellectual brilliance. Raju's imprisonment and Rosie's enlightenment occur simultaneously in the organic structure of the novel Afterwards, Raju leads a fugitive life away from the din and dustle.

Raju arrives at Mangalpur where a villager Velan misunderstands him a saint. Raju faces nervousness but he permits the impression to go deeper by pronouncing philosophical platitudes. Velan seeks the solution of personal crisis and Raju's common utterances assuage Velan of the spiritual dimensions of Raju. Instantly the village throngs to have a glimpse of the Swami. Gradually Raju realises attaining the

stature of a saint. He delivers a didactic note on the Bhagvad Gita, Puranas, etc. He allows the school teacher to engage the class in the temple. Traditional life style of saint attracts him so in order to have saintly recognition, he keeps a beard and long hair. He earns immense popularity. He is very well deified by the ignorant and innocent villagers. He himself is considered to be a panacea of all ailments. Now, he can barely think of his personal life. He has earned the stature of the Swamin and saviour of the village. In Indian spiritual perspective, Dr. Saryug Yadav analyses the mode of behaviour and says :

“In Indian theological framework once people have accepted Raju as a saint, they can never come down to treat him as an ordinary man or they can never bring him down to their common-level. Logically speaking being every faith perhaps there is some irrationality, but once faith is formed it becomes almost impregnable, and it spreads with miraculous pace and power. The godhead is thus the creation of human imagination, but so much of purity is associated with it that once it is created people will never allow it to crumble.”⁵

Structurally, in a sequential form, the crisis develops and deepens. The monsoon ditches and the country comes in the grip of the severe famine. Optimistically, people look for the Swami. Meanwhile, Velan the principal disciple of Raju gets injury. Raju sends a message through a boy : “Tell your brother, immediately wherever he may be, that unless they are good I will never eat.” The boy could not understand the implication and the words have been rendered in a distorted manner:” The swami, the Swami does not want any more... because ... it does not rain.” The entire village is rejuvenated with sagacious appreciation. People gather in mass in order to have a glance of the Swami who is undertaking the task of fasting for the causes of the people. It is the rare

occasion and the Health Department has taken a special care of maintaining sanitation. This is the ripe occasion of salvation, a time of purgation in which an individual obtains the sublime power to go beyond his self through spiritual victory. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly focuses the intricacy of the situation : “At last the collective faith of the people is transforming, Raju from what he really is, into a worthy object of its devotion. Towards the end, Raju loses the feeling of an actor, performing an act, the act becomes the reality, the mask becomes the man, and Raju, the guide turns into a guru.”⁶

Towards the close of the novel, a million dollar question is raised in the void, whether his fasting proves to be instrumental for bringing down the rains or not. The end of the novel gets a tautalising ambiguity which servers the artistic purpose. M.K.Naik suggests, “The ending is charged with a Hawthornian ambiguity ... whether the fake Sadhu’s genuine ordeal has really brought rain or not is left vague.”⁷ The common people think that the Swami breathes his last for the suffering humanity. Here, Raju reminds of Oedipus to whom the people of Thebes run for remedy in the time of utter chaow and calamity and Oedipus does what he can do. Primarily Oedipus stands for the discovery of a past whereas Raju is a discovery of an ironical circumstances caused by the conflict between what he is and what he is construed. But in both the cases the tragedy has got an epic dimension under the pressure of popular demand. At last, Raju yields to unconsciousness by chanting in a saintly prophecy, “Velan, it’s raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs—He sagged down.”

In the conflict between science and superstition, it is difficult to say that whether science is won or superstition is lost but there is no doubt to argue that a triumph of art is there. K.R.S.Iyengar attempts to resolve the crisis :

“Does it rain, or is it only Raju’s optical delusion? Does he really die, or merely sink down in exhaustion? Has the lie really become the truth, or has it been merely exposed? We are free to conclude as we like; Narayan might say in Pirandellian fashion : “Right you are, if you think so.”⁸

As a visionary, Narayan captures and commands the Indian psyche which is bristling over with its superstitious comprehension, gullibility, an admiration of pseudo—scientific objects and a rind of lucidity which is warp and woof of our day to day life.

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Kanthapura : A Stylistic Feat in Indian English Novel Writing

Raja Rao's profound and philosophic knowledge of Indian life, his passionate attachment with the Indian National Movement and his literary quest to search a soothing and inspiring language for delineating his thought have got expression in his debut-Kanthapura. Kanthapura—a cohesive whole comprises the three distinct strands of experience—the political, the religious and the social are so dovetailed into one another as to present a panoramic picture of the revival in the 20s of this century. Rama Jha rightly analyses the novel in her critical perspective and says :

“If the humanistic aspect of Gandhian thought influenced Mulk Raj Anand's treatment of social problems in his novels it is the metaphysical and spiritual aspect of it that shaped Rao's creative vision. Not that Rao is completely unaffected by the humanistic aspect of Gandhian thought, but he assimilated more deeply its spiritual and religious aspect.”¹

Theoretically 'Kanthapura' deals with Gandhi, Gandhian revolution, its impact and Nehru on a small south Indian villages caught in trouble and turbulent happenings of the national movement. The story covers the very volatile phase of Indian freedom struggle between Gandhi's Dandi March in 1930 to

Gandhi - Irwin Pact in 1931. Raja Rao has presented the story in the puranic "Akkhyan style"² which he terms in the "Foreword" as Sthala Purana in which "the past mingles with the present and the gods mingle with men..."³ relieving and mingling the contemporaneous socio—political history with the rich and religious mythology. Iyengar makes it a point, "what happens in Kanthapura is by no means a unique experience, but the telling of the story gives the whole affair an itihasic—at least a puranic dignity."⁴ The entire action is set in a village, thus the novel is, at its best, considered to be a village novel having a record of its changeless and ever changing choice. The story of Kanthapura is beautifully narrated by a typical Indian grand mother - Achakka with her own idiosyncratic norm. Symbolically, "Kanthapura is India in microcosm : what happened there is what happened every-where in India during those terrible years of our fight for freedom."⁵ In his defacto analysis of the book Iyengar rightly summed up the stylistic feature of Raja Rao in his own way. He says, "Gandhi and our village, but the styles of narration makes the book more a Gandhi Purana than a piece of mere fiction. Gandhi is the invisible God, Moorthy is the visible Avatar."⁶ Moorthy, a prudent protagonist came under the spell of Gandhi while he was a college students. The author himself was bristling over with tantalising developments so he got himself involved in Gandhism as well as in search for a Guru. Psychologically the novelist's own self or psyche is projected so extensively projected in the mind and make- up of moorthy which becomes, however, inescapable and inevitable.

In the heart of the village there is a temple dedicated to Kenchamma, great goddess, benign one. The organic picture of the village, ipso facto, is being constituted by a river, a hill and a temple with the presiding and all pervasive deity. The folk song pertaining to Kenchamma evokes in us images and attitudes meant for the people of Kanthapura. Kenchamma, the blood and bone of the village presents the core and cure of their lives and makes

everything meaningful. There is a colourful context of the money lender (Bhatta), the priest (Swami) and the Zamindar (Bhatta) which focus the traditional forces of oppression and exploitation. Moorthy, the Satyagrahi, the leader of the non-violent movement belongs to Gandhi in Kanthapura. Bade Khan is the embodiment of oppression, Bhatta stands for false orthodoxy. Range Gowda, indubitably, epitomises sense, sanity and honesty in the village. The village has been charged with deep and dense, abiding and all pervading localised colour and Charishma. To Raja Rao, literature is meant for spiritual experience, it is for him a theological thirst. Raja Rao himself argues:

“For me literature is Sadhana (spiritual discipline)... my writing is mainly the consequence of a metaphysical life, what I meant by Sadhana. And by man I mean the metaphysical entity. So the idea of literature as anything but a spiritual experience... is outside my perspective.”⁷

Gandhi is of the view that politics and religion are inextricably mated together. Kanthapura evinces this divine truth that man's status in the society is spiritual as much as it is political. In the ontological frame work the theme of Kanthapura is the liberation of Indian spirit by Gandhian ideas while Brahma Dutta Sharma pinpoints that “here Gandhian and Nehruvian socialism have been presented as two alternatives... and there comes a stage when the protagonist and his followers resolve to embrace the political philosophy of the Nehruvian socialism have been presented as two alternatives...and there comes a stage when the protagonist and his followers resolve to embrace the political philosophy of the Nehruvian socialism.”⁸ Kanthapura appears to be a dynamo of the Gandhian thought and theory. The leitmotif of Raja Rao in Kanthapura is his acute awareness of the spiritual “ideals and values of ancient India and its place and impact on the emotional make-up of the inhabitants of this south Indian Village during the period

when Gandhi's personality and thought was a force to be reckoned with."⁹ The novel is, in fact, as Iyengar says, "a veritable grammar of the Gandhian myth."¹⁰ In Kanthapura religious fervour is blended with social realism in such a way that the ideas of Gandhiji are easily comprehended by the villagers. The impact of Harikathas is ennobling and innovating and even the old women cannot remain detached. Gandhiji had been a divine phenomenon. "He is a saint, the Mahatma, a wise man and a soft man and a saint." It is worthwhile to suggest that the Dandi March has been portrayed as a pilgrimage. This is Moorthy, the Gandhian who keeps the village people as fast with the day-to-day activities of the Mahatma while he was on the Dandi March.

Gandhi rejected the tenet of Hindu Caste System. The opening of the temples too the pariahs whom Gandhiji called Harijan is an event of historical importance in the novel. Untouchability was considered to be a scar on the face of the society. It is, moreover, a revolutionary gusto in Kanthapura that the brahmin boy Moorthy who becomes the spokes person of Gandhian idealism and ideologies. In the Kanthapura, the chants of '*Satya Narayan Maharaj Ki Jai*' changes into the shouts of '*Inquilab Zindabad*' and Gandhi Mahatma has come on this earth "to slay the serpent of the foreign rule." When the village panchayat committees are constituted Range Gowda finds Seenu as the "fire-tailed Hanuman." In Kanthapura, all the plans and programmes of Gandhiji have been taken into account, such as non-violence, untouchability, prohibition and the way in which the women of Kanthapura under the leadership of Moorthy, Rangamma and Ratna came forward in the wake of the struggle. Such is the spirit of women of Kanthapura that their faith in Gandhi and in their goddess Kenchamma 'Benign and bounteous' sustains their life spirit. It is, however, captivating that the spiritual force of the mother goddess is invoked again and again to enthuse people to action. This is the only language through which the political idea of India's

liberation can be transmitted to the villagers. In fact, the novelist “locates the action of the novel in historical time, not in illusory space, for it provides a concrete representation of a significant aspect of Indian freedom struggle, in which the accent is on demonstrating Gandhi’s main achievement of arousing the consciousness of the Indian masses against the British. Rao, of course, mythicises Gandhi and his mission, for purely strategic reasons.”¹¹ In the theoretical stimulation Kanthapura tradition and modern sensibility absorb each other and flow to foster society.

In Kanthapura both the matter and manner are equally good and grand. The use of tone and tenor, cadence and diction, the irony and humour and the sublimity in a language make the novel dazzling and delightful. The whole of the Indian tradition is brought up to date, along with its pertinent persuasions for the present, flows into the villagers, because it is rendered in and recommended to the villager’s own idiom. Kanthapura proves to be a milestone in combating the colonial complex and winning respect for the Indian—Indian in form and content. Hence it becomes a potent weapon for creative use of English for the expression of a truly Indian sensibility. Now-a-days the novel has become a bright book of life and one of the effective means of education of the sensibility of the young. Kanthapura is a breathless story, of stories illustrating a story, in the age-old Indian tradition of story telling. Structurally the novel operates on the village level and all the Knowledge and wisdom that come to it or go out of it can only be at that level. It is a tale told by a grand mother from her rich repertoire. Thus, it can be said that, “Kanthapura is a supreme example of Raja Rao’s grand style; it is an excellent realisation of his own dictum.”¹²

The novel discusses the distinctive Indian sensibility with peasant sensibility even in the decond language situation. The words are English, but the organisation is Indian and the novelist

had to organise it himself. It helped him escape from the clichés and the elaborate prose style of the novel that had come down to us from the Victorian novelists. There is no linguist who wishes to keep abreast of current developments in his subject can afford to gloss over Raja Rao's theoretical pronouncements. Like philosophers and psychologists Raja Rao can draw upon in his discussion of the relationship that holds between language and thought. In fact, it is part of Raja Rao's case that linguistics, psychology and philosophy are no longer to be regarded as separate and autonomous disciplines. Man is clearly distinguished from other animal species, not by the faculty of thought or intelligence by his capacity for language. Raja Rao's native use of the English language is to describe the ever-enlarging spheres of our relationships for example. "He is my wife's elder brother's wife's brother-in-law." *Kanthapura* reflects the whole of the social milieu of Indian women just in one coinage 'Kitchen Queen.' Stylistically the syntactic structures of long sentences, repetitions of names and words make the novel an archetypal. The author, in no way, suffers from the penury of the stylistic devices to suit a wide range of emotional or mental constructs. To Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* is inspired by a reading of Ignazio Silone's 'Fontamara'. The narrative mode used in both the novels perpetuates the oral tradition which is in consonance with the rural background of the novels. In 'Kanthapura' the story has been narrated in the first person narratives like 'Fontamara'. Raja Rao in 'Kanthapura' by using the spirit of 'Sthalapurana' highlights the esoteric significance or the local legendary history of a particular place. Silone also says in the 'Foreword' to *Fontamara*, "Let everyman then have the right to tell his tale in his own way" and he further says :

"The art of story telling, the art of putting one word after another, one sentence after another resembles the ancient art of weaving, the ancient art of putting one thread after another

one colour after another, clearly, tidily, plainly for all to see.”¹³

Silone in ‘Fontamara’ has used the oral tradition of story-telling in his own way. In an interview Raja Rao explores the puranic strain in his novel *Kanthapura* :

“The aesthetic is that, sometimes, I like to write like a Purana. I like the puranic conception. That is the only conception of novel for me. I don’t want to compare my novel with any foreign novel. I am very much an Indian and the Indian form is the puranic form. Form comes naturally to me.”¹⁴

A close textural analysis of the novel crystallises this fact that linguistics is an empirical science, whose purpose is to construct a theory of human language. Raja Rao employs a daring and highly meaningful experiment in language, a language deliberately adapted from the archaic Sanskrit tradition of story telling. In order to catch the full flavour of the Indian speech and rhythm in English, Raja Rao has put the whole story in the mouth of an old widow, different from the intonations of the King’s English. In the opening of the novel, Rao says :

“Our village—I do not think you have ever heard about it—Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara.”

Raja Rao’s spiritual doctrine presented in ‘*Kanthapura*’ has a puranic pattern fundamentally suits the socio-spiritual cosmic insight articulated in the novel. The epigraph on the title page of the novel is full of vedantic nuances focusing the doctrine of incarnation as nucleus of the philosophy of avatar. The novel has a consistency in its narratology and prophetic utterances without any subsequent chapterisation. In ‘*Kanthapura*’ Raja Rao has, ably, shown “an epic breath of vision, a metaphysical vigour and philosophical depth, a symbolic richness, a lyrical fervour and an

essential indianness of style.”¹⁵ Therefore it would be relevant to comment that, “the experimentation that Raja Rao hinted at was of the creation of a mode of expression which could give the real flavour of Indianess to the western readers besides the meanings and values of Indian life in a language comfortably accessible to Indian people.”¹⁶ The description of the pastoral life and the linguistic use of the Puranic form for all the facts of language behaviour adequately purports Raja Rao’s critical venture to evolve a literary form rooted in the indigenous soil. C. Paul Verghese explores the stylistic facets of Raja Rao in his own words :

“It (Kanthapura) is a novel written entirely in a manner that is the author’s own; it has, because of the skilful adaptation of the English Language to incorporate the idiom and rhythm of the regional language and because of its theme and local colour, the texture of a novel written in an Indian language—a rare feat in English.”¹⁷

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The Calcutta Chromosome : A Strange Odyssey of Time and Mystery

Amitabh Ghosh is one of the most popular names in today's Indian English fiction writing. Whether it is "The Calcutta Chromosome" or "The Count Down" arrests the critical attention of the people in Indian as well as in abroad. "The Calcutta Chromosome" is a distinctive novel in the sense that it takes up the issue of Malaria and Mystery. In everyday life of India thousands of people die of this Malaria disease but it has been for the first time presented in the fictive form by the creative writer. The author in this novel deals with the subject of the Malarial fever amalgamating it with mysticism and mystery, supernatural and superstition, considering it the philosophy of science and counter-science. The novelist argues :

"...Now Let's say there was something like Science and counter -science? Thinking of it in the abstract, wouldn't you say that the first principle of a functioning counter-science would have to be secrecy? The way I see it, wouldn't just have to be secretive about what it did (it couldn't hope to beat the scientists at the game anyway); it would have to be secretive in what it did.

Thematically Amitabh Ghosh articulates secrecy, mystery and

juxtaposes Knowledge and comes across what he terms conventional Knowledge. The central character of the novel, Murugan explains the intricacy of the subject matter. He says :

“May be this other team started with the ideas that knowledge is self-contradictory, may be they believed that to know something is to change it, therefore in knowing something, you have already changed what you think you know so you don't really know it at all : you only know its history. May be they thought that knowledge couldn't begin without acknowledging the impossibility of knowledge.”

Murugan, the nucleus of the novel, a scientist has all command over the Malarial fever and the findings of Ronald Ross, a Nobel Laureate. He narrates the story to Antar, the Egyptian technocrat who too enjoys the Company of Murugan in the same New York's Life - Watch with his computer AVA. The texture of the novel has been woven in a topsyturvy manner which focuses the skilful effort of Murugan's play with the buttons on AVA. Everything happens like cinematography and Antar watches it like a film. Though everything is discussed in the twenty-first century but the scientific methodology of the discourse is altogether new one. The novel opens with the episode of the 21st century in Antar's flat in New York with the appearance of ID card on AVA's screen that demonstrates its system. This kind of computer has its own system for self-advancement. The novelist artistically displays this system of forthcoming era : “Anything she didn't recognizes she'd take apart on screen, producing microscopic structural analyses, spinning the images around and around, tumbling them over, resting them on their side, producing ever greater refinements of details.” Again the novelist says :

“She had been programmed to hunt out real-time information, and that was what she was determined to get. Once she'd wrung the last, meaningless detail out of him, she'd give the object on her screen, final spin, with a bizarrely human

smugness, before propelling it into the horizonless limbo of her memory.”

This aforesaid statement purports the moods and moments of the novel and describes the panoramic details which became apparent to Antar. It has been made clear by Murugan that the same events occurred earlier in 1995 in Calcutta and hundred years ago in Calcutta and Hyderabad. The novelist here makes a creative use of time through computer system in the same way as H.G. Wells does in “Time Machine” to move in time-past-present and future. From the readers’ point of view it is the past of the 19th century, the contemporary time of August 1995 and the forthcoming time which weave the centrality of the novel. The novelist has explored the philosophy of time divided between narrated time and narrational time. Amitabh Ghosh tries to delve into the complexity of time theory which can be understood by the English theoreticians.

Nicholas Berdyaev’s theory of time is akin to Bergson’s concept of time. Berdyaev explores the three fundamental categories—cosmic, historical and existential—to describe time history in literature. “The Calcutta Chromosome” is a befitting example of this classification made by Berdyaev. Whatever way time is classified, as conceptual or perceptual as *chronos* or *kairos*, its paramount significance to the creative writer and his art is unavoidable. Vance Bourjaily rightly pinpoints that “the structure of the novel comes from how you decide to handle time.”² In fact, time leads to certain developments in causal sequence, culminating in a particular result : What is stressed here is that events unfold in a causal order and one thing leads to another as in Hardy’s ‘Tess of the D’UrberVilles’. Retrospective time can be analysed in Kierkegaard’s maxim, “Life can only be lived forward and understood backward.”³ Here, the character momentarily steps out of the flux of time, considers his past and often changes his

complete life-style. The novelist wittingly shuffles time in such a way that a reader often loses track of all time references. There is a dialectical relationship between clock time and psychological time with no before and after connections. 'The Calcutta Chromosome' is a novel in which poly temporal time-scheme has been employed. In the poly temporal time-schemes there is a constant shift from past to present to future. Connections of time and space are displaced by a more fundamental search for axiological connections. Values becomes extra-temporal and clock - time is subjugated to the inner experience of the time. Lukacs says "...time is profoundly ambiguous in nature, a force both life-giving and life-destroying ... is also the very fabric of life for reader as well as for the hero the very substance of experience..."⁴

Antar after the sincere speculation of two hours over Murugan's studies and experience of two days in Calcutta of the 19th century comes to unfold the hidden mystery of the events. The perusal of the text crystallises this fact that the story has been conceived at three levels of time through AVA. Theologically the novelist peeps into the oriental philosophy of religion, birth and rebirth, transposition and transcendence that is very akin to dramatic satisfaction. In the light of scientific discovery of Ronald Ross the novelist depicts the supernatural power of Mangala, a secretary to D.D.Cunningham. She is considered to be a goddess incarnate—who suggests a cure for siphilis. She too has the potency of transcending life beyond life. The contextual analysis of the letter of Farley conveys the two interesting parallel events in relation to Mangala in 1893. Farley being a scientist does not believe in rituals performed by Mangala so he warns the common people and exposes the false belief of the lady. Simultaneously he watches the development very curiously. Later he switches over to his own job to see 'the transformations that Laveran described'. He studies the slides smeared with the dying pigeon's

blood. Then, “The saw Laveran’s rods appear, hundreds of them, tiny cylindrical things, with their pointed penetrating heads piercing the blood miasma.”

In fact, new invention was made by his team mates exclusively meant for the future time. Farley’s knowledge about Mangala brought his doom. He is promised by Managala through the young boy assistant to reveal everything.” If I would but accompany him to his birth place, fortunately the place of which he spoke is not far from the location of my clinic. We are to leave tomorrow.” Elijah Farley did not reach to his destination, he disappeared in the midst of his journey; never appeared again. It has been discovered by the police that he had indeed boarded the train at sealdan, as scheduled but has disappeared before his destination—a remote rarely used station called Renupur, in severe monsoon weather. Later it was reported that a young man had been seen carrying his luggage. It has been said that his knowledge for Mangala proved to be fatal for him. The letter which has been written by Farley seems to be instrumental for Murugan in constructing the plot of encounter between Farley and Mangala and the disappearance of Farley. Now, there remains nothing about Farley’s knowledge and the existence of that letter. The author creates mystery about Farley’s intelligence and his disappearance. In the same manner, another incident takes place in 1995. Once Sonali comes out to locate the whereabouts of Roman Haldar at Rabinson street. The novelist says :

“She caught a glimpse of tops of dozens of heads, some male, some female, young and old, packed in close together. Their faces were obscured by the smoke and flickering firelight.(139)

Roman Haldar’s and Mrs. Arafounian’s bodies are set for the ritual performance. Romen Haldar decides to meet Sonali

during evening hour but all on a sudden he disappears. According to the design of the novel, the novelist does not think necessary to explore his sudden demise or what he calls, disappearance. Both the events occur at the difference of hundred years accentuates the intricacy and mystification of the plot. In case of Farley his knowledge has been kept unknown which is proved to be decisive in his disappearance—death. Even in relation to Haldar nothing has been chalked out barring the incident of mysterious rituals which are performed in Calcutta in 1995 in the name of some special knowledge of transcendence. Afterwards, the novelist again weaves a story of a station-master who is murdered at Renupur, (the place where Farley disappeared in 1894) on a moonless night by Laakhan. In the years of 1933, Phulboni fortunately saves himself from the train accident. Same is the case in 1895 when Grigson had hardly saved himself. Both the incidents took place in the same circumstances and the persons who were trying to kill them were not recognised. Phulboni himself narrates Laakhan, the ghost trains which he visualised and also the ghost-station master with whom he encounters. In the heart of the novel Lutchman, Laakhan, Lucky of the 19th, the 20th and the 21st centuries appear and disappear. As a matter of fact, these characters are not even constructed or projected as multi-facted characters. Stylistically, the organisation of the novel is something unique. Murugan correlates the same boy who once comes at the doorstep of Urmila with fish wrapped in papers as Laakhan. The novelist finds a common feature in connection with all these boys that—they have a deformed thumb. The novel after all does not ensure any physical or intellectual improvisation.

Owing to these parallel developments of the plot, the mystery of the novel gradually becomes acute and intense. No body can say convincingly as to which direction the novel is moving ahead. In all the mystery novels the novelists make a successful attempt to arrive at the resolution. At last the AVA presents Murugan,

Urmila and Sonali going towards the station Sealdah, where they came to know that Phulbone and Mrs. Arnouin have left the venue. Murugan too has been found, later, missing from here. Everything has been left to the imagination of the reader. This is Sealdah station from where everyone has been disappearing. At the moment they are going towards the station in 1995 while Urmila utters that she would protect them and take them across and the next moment, Antar listening sounds, getting similarity between Tara and Urmila and Maria and Sonali, speaking to him, as if they were accompanying him in his room, “a voice whispering in his ear, ‘keep watching’ we have here, we are all with you.”

There are so many queries and questions which lurk in the void. No body argues from what he is to be saved and where he has to go across. The novelist explains everything in the galaxy of his theory of counter-science and secrecy and contradictions of knowledge. He himself points out “what I’m really talking about is technology for interpersonal transference.” This technology is considered to be ‘The Calcutta Chromosome’. “Herein we find the echoes of the Bhagvad Gita, about body being a sort of garment to be discarded when it turns old and torn to acquire a new, fresh garment for the soul. The end result of the application of this theory to the characters in the novel is far from satisfactory.”⁵ Amitabh Ghosh in his unconvincing attempt scrutinises the topical issue of the recurrence of the Malarial fever and the theory of time and space. The Edwardian novel was felt to neglect psychological for physical detail and to run, in the current of time and space without diving deep into the infinite potentiality of any one moment. Whatever is most valuable in modern/post modern fiction writing is a meditation on the nature of time, on the mystery of memory and personality. The meeting of the past and present defying differences as well as similarities is crucial to the novel. The narrative moves up and down through layers of time. The whole pattern is ‘a marriage of past and present with the flying multiplicity of the

future racing towards one'.

No doubt, this is a readable novel but it does not create a long lasting impact. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly finds "To prise them out one would have to read the novel a second time."⁶ Some passages remarkably evoke the Phulboni episode told by Urmila and Phulboni's anguished cry for the goddess of silence. Calcutta has been presented a city of love and laughter unlike Anita Desai's 'Voices in the city'. This city seems to be craving for the goddess of silence. The writer through his gallery of characters create a thrill in the reader's mind but the use of new technology through which characters appear and disappear do not give us an impression of the work of literary heavy-weight.

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‘Nectar in a Sieve’ : A Saga of an All-out Human Effort and Enterprise

Kamala Markandaya’s literary debut ‘Nectar in a Sieve,’ dramatises the tragedy and trauma of a traditional Indian village and a peasant family whose livelihood depends on rain, rice and land. Rukmani and Nathan, who knit and knot the tapestry of the novel, have become the prey of the two evils—Zamindari system and capitalist economy. The novel portrays the narrator heroine Rukmani who earns the prominent position in the novel and she too embodies the central consciousness. On the thematic plane the novel becomes the saga of a peasant woman Rukmani, the soul of the story.

The texture of the novel has been akin to pearl S.Buck’s ‘The Good Earth’ and K.S.Venakataramani’s ‘Murugan the Tiller’. Unlike O-Lan in ‘The Good Earth’ Rukmani is educated and sophisticated woman who is well aware of reading and writing. She is quite successful in establishing herself as an enterprising and industrious wife. The name of the novel has been derived from S.T.Coleridge’s lines :

“Work without hope draws nectar in a Sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live.”

The name of the novel is appositely striking and stimulus if it

is judged against the background of this novel. 'Nectar in a Sieve' articulates the village life in which Rukmani becomes Kernal who suffers from Pillar to post. The details of Rukmani's suffering highlight the truth of coleridge's doctrine 'work without hope draws nectar in a Sieve.' The plight of the village becomes the pivotal because of the impact of the modern urban culture engineered by the British rule on the traditional Indian rural life and the value system. Being an old woman—a widow-Rukmani recapitulates her bygone days in a reminiscent mood. Actually, she hails from a family which has become poverty-stricken due to the wedding of three daughters. She has been offered to Nathan, a helpless and hapless tenant farmer lost in all walks of his life barring in his love for his wife. She recalls her early marital life with a finge of nostalgia. They dwell in a mud-hut built by Nathan and life marches ahead smoothly so long as the fields are green and rains are regular. Nageshwar Rao rightly examines the realistic pattern of the plot in his fictitious framework:

“The novel deals with the peasants their activities, problems and anxieties, hopes and expectations, and joys and sorrows. It is , therefore, natural to find in it an emphasis on rural ethos and rural value systems. In this value system the productivity of the land, the fecundity of men, the fertility of women or the fruitfulness of the plants is of great importance.”¹

First of all, Rukmani becomes the mother of a daughter, whom she names Irawaddy. She does not conceive again for a few years, Rukmani is worried that she is not blessed with sons. Her desire, however, is fulfilled through the medical aid she finds from Dr. Kenny. In no time, she gets a big family with eight mouths to be fed - five sons and one daughter, in addition to the two of them. Rukmani, the prime figure does not accept defeat in the face of these odds and obstaclis. Simultaneously half a dozen children—Ira, Arjun, Thambi, Murugan, Raja and Selvam—whom she

mothered did create financial imbalances in the family. Towards the end of the novel she has been exploring the possibility to discover nectar in a Sieve, hopeful and undaunted. In the mood and make up of an ordinary village woman Rukmani is by and large a conventional person. She shares her husband's feeling that a good harvest means peace in a farmer's home. In the world of Rukmani and Nathan, peace and prosperity are not long lasting and with the advent of the tannery in the village, tragedy starts in a sinister way. The invasion of the tannery in the village is as sinister as "the cruel sky, calm, blue, indifferent to our need." The tannery is treated as a symbol of mechanical power which destroys and damages the traditional backbone of the village. Because of the encroachment of the urban people, price rise, disease and corruption have destabilised the village. Rukmani conveys her view point to her husband Nathan about the men who have come from a far away city. "They may live in our midst but I can never accept them, for they lay their hands upon us and we are all turned from tilling to barter, and hoard our silver since we cannot spend it." With the coming of the tannery in the village, there is a sea-change in the economy of the village. Consequently they are looking forward for other means of earning. This has been befittingly mirrored by the psychological behaviour of Rukmani's sons who have no taste to work in the fields and decide to work in the tannery.

The first person narration "encourages the reader to identify himself with the thought process of woman narrator whose point of view becomes also the point of view embodied in the novel."² Rukmani's son Raja breathes his last at the tannery with a view to averting starvation, the village people are moving towards Ceylon the areas of tea plantation. The people face a deadly blow by getting a notice from the zamindar to evacuate because they cannot pay the revenue due to bad harvest. In the further development of the story, Rukmani and Nathan go outside to locate the whereabouts of their son Murugan in the town where they find shelter in the

premises of the temple because free food is served there to the poor. The climax of the scene is that Nathan dies of hunger and disease and Rukmani comes back to her native villages to live with her son Selvam and her daughter Ira. Ultimately she expresses her consent with her husband's view, "Better to starve where we are bred than live here." A perusal of the text evinces that Rukmani like Wang Lung is not sheer hopeless and it is her cherished hope that moulds or makes her an insignia of sacrifice, sensibility, love, tolerance, courage and compassion, K. V. Surendran in his critical scrutiny focuses the unyielding syndrome of the narrator's mental construct. He says :

"In a sense the whole story is centred round Rukmani, the narrator heroine. She is one who is destined to receive shocks one after the other in her life. At the same time we find her overcoming the misfortunes which follow her like a shadow. In fact, she is one who possesses a mighty will and it is exactly this will that helps her to find a way out even when she faces acute turbulence in her life."³

In the structural schema of the novel the plot is unveiled to the reader in a flash back technique. According to this scheme the story begins where the novel ends. Madhusudan Prasad rightly examines the intricacy of the plot. "Nectar in a Sieve has a not circular structure. The beginning and end of the novel are closely connected creating a circular structure."⁴ The novel has been designed in such a way that even after the unending troubles and tensions faced by Rukmani the novel does not culminate in fiasco. Arnold Kettle rightly analyses the technical tool of the creativity and suggests:

"One of the limiting factors of the autobiographical technique in a novel is that the total effect of the novel depends inevitably on the quality and consciousness of the narrator."⁵

Throughout the novel, the narrator is a peasant woman, the entire story is to be filtered through the consciousness of Rukmani, the peasant woman, "Fact after fact, situation after situation that affected her life are presented chronologically, thus giving the novel a linear structure. The novel is a straightforward narration of the story of Rukmani. There are no subplots and there is neither mystery nor suspense."⁶ Theoretically, the linear progression of the story in 'Nectar in a Sieve' is not a mere articulation of incidents but an artistic interpolation of cause and effect sequences; one naturally and convincingly leading to the next.

The overwhelming feature of the novel is the theological vitality of the narrator against such formidable enemies to her culture, the draconian landlord and the heartless industry. Rukmani's passive acceptance of the reality of the day conforms to the tradition of an Indian woman. Rukmani emerges as a triumph of tradition. She appears to be a mother figure in 'Nectar in a Sieve'. She complies with the value system of Indian sociological framework as her stamina is hidden in her innate capacity for compassion and sacrifice. Undoubtedly, she is not a match for the masculine strength. She politely admits that "the land is the mistress to man, not to woman; the heavy work needed is beyond her strength". The maiden moving spirit which unites the whole structure of the novel is the character of the narrator Rukmani. She should not be merely known as a girl, a loving and devoted wife and a sacrificing mother. She has, of course, transcended these limited physical identities to represent the universal mother figure. A.K.Prasad rightly explores the magnetic dimension of the narrator heroine Rukmani and suggests:

"She is the centrifugal force providing sap to the other aspects of the body of the novel and helping it to stand erect. Kamala Markandaya has not confined to any particular class, creed

or convention. She is conceived as the encompassing, enduring, devoted, sacrificing, suffering, loving and forgiving mother figure.”⁷

She is presented as eternal mother bound by love and affection to her hearth and home. Biologically woman is treated as a receiver who gives birth to human beings. Even on philosophical and psychological plane she is found more receptive, mimetic and absorbing who imbibes her everything which normally comes her way—joy, happiness, pain, poverty and poison. In fact, woman’s journey from home to her husband’s house is her journey to motherhood.

Like O-Lan of Pearl S. Buck’s ‘The Good Earth’ Rukmani becomes the subject of tolerance. Even poverty, hunger coupled with misfortunes do not divert her piety. Rather these strengthen her spirit of struggle who has not come to know penury. At first in her husband’s home she experiences poverty and starvation. She suffers for the sake of her family but she does not succumb. She fights against the heaviest odds and never accepts defeat. She accepts all and everything. She herself utters:

“It is true, one gets used to everything. I had got used to the noise and the smell of the tannery; they no longer affected me. I had seen the slow, calm beauty of our village melt in the blast from the town, and I grieved no more, so now I accepted the future and Ira’s lot in it, and thrust it from me; only sometimes when I was weak, or myself rebellions, protesting, rejecting and no longer calm.” Rukmani never rejects or revolts. She does not simply concede the harsh truth of the tannery but too of her daughter Ira’s troublesome marriage and her defiant social approach to sex-affair. She is at a loss to Kunti’s manipulation and at the disclosure of illegitimate affair with her husband Nathan. Kunti, the victim

of industrialisation and the vagaries of nature compels Rukmani to give her some grains. Later on, he confesses his affair with Kunti's before Rukmani and discloses the fact that he has fathered Kunti's sons. Immediately Rukmani does not find it true but after the realisation she feels pain, anger and disillusionment at her husband's infidelity. Nevertheless, Rukmani is a woman of strong will-power and strong determination.

Kamala Markandaya narrates her story with clarity and brevity that relinquishes unnecessary digressions. Her longing in the sociological affair of Indian life is keen and penetrating. Under this circumstance it is true that "the subject of the novel is almost invariably the relation of the individual to society."⁸ 'Nectar in a Sieve' presents the panoramic picture of a society which is in flux. Markandaya heralds human ethos and ethics and is against oppression and exploitation in any form-political, economic, cultural or racial. It is, in fact, Rukmani's strength, an all-out human effort that sustains the novel. There is a dazzling use of the fictitious devices like irony and imagery. Nathan advises Rukmani to bend like the grass so that she would not break. This image can be construed as the blood and bone of the novel. Rukmani helps Kunti to be delivered of her child fathered by Nathan. Ira conceives an illegitimate child who is previously abandoned by her husband because of infertility. The most ironic situations is that Rukmani who despises Kunti for her immorality has to accept Ira's prostitution and the illegitimate son too.

Kamala Markandaya like Mulk Raj Anand, K.S. Venkataramani and Raja Rao has projected the picture of modern India under the impact of intellectual and cultural change. In their purview these novelists focus the individual talents and sensibilities and purport the philosophy of intellectual and cultural change. To Markandaya, individual sensibility is chiselled by the varying

cultural and social forces. She has narrated the heart-rendering tragedy of India as the loss of the truly human, the truly personal. In her creative outputs she has presented as a sensitive novelist, the girls doomed to unhappy marriages or the tyranny of custom, or people dehumanised by society, its blind and incessant demands.

There is a clash or conflict between the scientific spirit and the basic human values in, 'Nectar in a Sieve'. The novel is overcharged with references of the conventional customs, beliefs and superstitions. Nathan is a tenant farmer who wakes with the sunrising and keeps himself busy during the time of sowing and harvesting. Nathan's gradual impoverishment reminds one of Hori Ram, an illiterate tenant farmer in Prem Chand's *Godan*. Hori Ram Mahto is a symbol of simplicity and usefulness. In the pattern of typical Indian peasant, he too is fatalist believing in age-old customs and superstitions. Hori Ram, a man of older, traditional morality fails to comprehend the changing circumstances. Nathan too in 'Nectar in a Sieve' is a traditional tenant farmer who desires his sons to work on the fields but that does not interest them. Nathan's aspirations are shunned and shattered and like Hori Ram and Dhania in Premchand's *Godan* Rukmani and Nathan in 'Nectar in a Sieve' are not defeated in their crusade against the changing socio-economic force. They seem to be the embodiments of the ignorance, endurance, and the unflinching devotion to their age-old traditions to which they are tied with inextricable bondage and they live for it and die for it.

The novelist in 'Nectar in a Sieve' visualises the pangs and problems of a south Indian village from a sophisticated, educated and urbanised outlook. The style is simple and straight forward and the novelist does not attempt to intellectualise and philosophise. Similarly Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* deals with a south Indian village to the readers by means of the same narrative mode. In 'Kanthapura' the narrator is a grandmother named Achakka who

narrates the story and also gives a critique on the contemporary happenings. The conflict caused by the changing social processes is the theme of both 'Kanthapura' and 'Nectar in a Sieve'. In the former the main focus is on the impact of Gandhiji on a remote south Indian village but there are other thematic levels also, such as the exploitation of the coolies in the British Coffee Estates and the exploitation of the self-respecting villagers by the agents of the zamindar and the money-lender of the village. But in a 'Nectar in a Sieve' the prime focus is on the conflict arising out of the setting up of the tannery in the village. The novel ends on a note of optimism with Rukmani's hope in the 'adopted' son Puli, a 'compassionate creature' who drew from her 'the arrows of sorrow one by one'. So, when Rukmani comes home, she feels that she is not alone.

Kamala Markandaya in 'Nectar in a Sieve' has portrayed the life and longing of the ordinary village folk with all the details usually associated with their way of life. The change is not only distinctive and discernible in their economic status but it is also visible in their ways and behaviour. Rukmani, the axis of the novel is the most befitting example of this change and its consequences. The portrayal of her marriage and the beginning of her conjugal life unfolds through the narrative, the changing social conditions and the vignettes of village life. The novel is a realistic articulation of Rukmani and Nathan and their fight for the 'survival of the fittest' for their family. While Markandaya narrates the story of misery and morbidity of Nathab and Rukmani she also depicts a realistic account of the sufferings of peasants in colonial India. Uma Parmeshwaran critically investigates the basic theme of 'Nectar in a Sieve' :

“Nectar in a Sieve is the story of the faceless twilight of Indian agrarian bankruptcy, the horizon showing through the silent trees now with crimson gashes, now with soul-exalting splendour, always holding out the promise that the setting sun

will rise again after the night, the night ever approaching yet never encompassing.”⁹

This is Rukmani's concern, commitment, immediacy, urgency and veracity that desing the novel a credible chronicle of the peasant's struggle and life at the time when social change was taking place and give the novel an epic dimension. It is Kamala Markandaya's deep theoretical attachment to the peasants that makes Nathan and Rukmani the representatives of the uprooted peasants.

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Feminist Critical Theory and the Novels of Anita Desai

Feminist critical theory is considered to be a political discourse, a literary and theoretical commitment to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism not only a gender study in literature. In fact, feminist critical perspective and theory become pertinent to the study and analysis of the social, institutional and personal power relations between the sexes.

Sexual Politics, a phenomenal study critically explores the task of feminist critics and theorists and also exposes the ways of male dominance over females. From the structuralists point of view it has been found that the feminist critics have employed wit to 'deconstruct' male dominated ways of seeing. "In academic institutions 'theory' is often male, even macho; it is the hard, intellectual, avant-garde of literary studies."¹ Feminist theoreticians have generally revealed the fraudulent objectivity of male science. In the Freudian framework it has been castigated for their blatant sexism. It is for their assumption that female sexuality is shaped by 'penis envy: Even in the postmodernist analysis feminist criticism wishes to escape the 'fixities and definites' of theory and to develop a female discourse. More recently feminists have been attracted to the Lacanian and Derridean types of post-structuralist theory, perhaps because they actually refuse to assert a 'masculine'

authority of truth.

Simon de Beauvoir in her pioneering work *The Second sex* seeks primary inquiries of modern feminism. In a critical venture when a woman tries to seek her identity she tries to define herself by saying I am a woman. 'The factual analysis suggests the basic asymmetry between the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. In fact both these terms—"Feminine and Masculine represent social constructs - patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms."² In the very concept of deconstruction Cixous considers femininity as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos and darkness. Thus there evolves a new concept of a non-being. Julia Kristeva's emphasis on marginality allows the repression of the feminine as a position and not the essence. Kristeva in one of the out-standing articles, "Women's Time" explores a deconstructive approach to sexual difference and argues for feminist struggle to be seen historically and politically as a three-tiered phenomenon. (i) women demand equality (ii) women extol femininity (iii) women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical.³

Toril Moi rejects the third position as it does not consider the political reality of feminism. As a matter of fact "feminism aims at grabbing power - the position to dictate and direct action and thinking of others from men, and it is possible because in modern times strength is all powerful and this can be achieved through intellect rather than through physical strength."⁴ Because of their intellectual sensibility women can earn a lot but the economic power cannot give her bliss and thrill of life. Psychologically woman needs man's loving company and thus feminism cannot be Anti-male and cannot be contented with Lesbianism. It is however believed that feminism must raise the 'woman question' in all its aspects-all the issues pertaining to the growth and grandeur of women.

In the light of feminist critical theory Anita Desai's novels can be examined as the manifesto of female predicament. She, moreover, represents the welcome "Creative release of the feminine sensibility."⁵ 'Cry the Peacock', a tour de force stands next only to 'The Serpent and the Rope' discusses the mind of Maya in feminine framework. Feminism is deeply into feeling and sensation whereas Masculine is into intuition and thinking. Maya and Gautama are opposed to each other and both of them represent the extremities of feminine and masculine principle. Maya feels destabilised and depotentiated because even after four years of marriage, Gautama has failed to fecundate. Maya's oft remarks to Kathakali dancers delineate her detest of the masculine. Maya's relationship with her husband, father, brother Arjuna reflects archetypal feminism. Ann Lowry Weir examines the feminine sensibility of the novelist and argues :

"Anita Desai is the Vanguard of a new generation of Indian Writers who are experimenting with themes of inner consciousness. She gives her readers valuable insights into the feminine consciousness through her memorable protagonists."⁷

'Voices in the City' articulates Monisha's plight, psychic life and intimately shows the women like female birds in the cages. Monisha dies, screaming for life; for the first experience of real feeling of pain awakens in her a desire to live. She loves to realize herself as an unfettered individual and not to become at any stage a complacent, tame wife who adjusts herself to a gilded cage. "She is too silent for the family and the World distrusts her silence. She wants to be herself and not to compromise."⁸

In 'where shall we go this summer' there is aching void in the life of Sita as a woman, a wife and a mother. Anita Desai's fiction inextricably fuses the tension between tradition and

modernity, individualism and social unity, convention and innovation and determines the dimension and direction of the themes. The plot is replete with symmetry and harmony pervading the events of the story. Sita and her husband receive and react as if they were the denizens of different worlds. Sita is badly disturbed by having a bitter experience of insular and unimaginative way of life of her husband and his people.

Anita Desai marks a revolutionary departure without trespassing into terra incognita and is happy to have woman protagonists in her novels. Nanda Kaul's withdrawal from life and family is not the result of any existential realization of man's ultimate aloneness but she has just been 'reduced' to such a state. Anita Desai priorities the predicament of women and visualises life for a woman as a series of obligations and commitments. Broadly speaking, Desai's themes, characterisation and image discuss the confinement and lack of freedom. In addition to existentialistic reality of life she evokes the sentiment and sensibility of women for their role and respect in society. The efforts of the feminist critics resulted in a massive recovery of almost forgotten women writers and also re-reading of literature by women with a view to understand the evolution of the "female aesthetic."

Anita Desai all young characters crave for women's lib. Maya in 'cry, the Peacock' who is not mature and intelligent enough complains of being treated as "a wild beast on a leash" which induces in her "a humiliating sense of a neglect." Maya is shocked by having a far-fetched difference between her lot and that of her brother, Arjuna who is set free and enjoys liberty like "a young hawk that could not be tamed, that fought for its liberty." Similarly Monisha in 'Voices in the city' longs to thrust her "head out of the window" but the "bars are closely set." The entire novel is iltered with meaningful suggestions about Monisha's identity crisis. "I am all exterior" and "I done with most things." "Traceless, meaningless,

uninvolved—does this not amount to non-existence? “She says. Sita in ‘Where shall we go this summer’ wishes to have freedom and it is manifested in her fascination with the foreigner who she meets on the roadside. Sita always has the feeling of being tied with a chain, which “can only throttle, choke and enslave.”

In ‘Fire on the Mountain’ there develops a critical situation when Nanda Kaul retreats to Carignano after allowing her husband to have a life long affair with another woman. Though she does not follow the revolutionary path of Sita but feels that she could be ‘shipwrecked.’ No doubt, Anita Desai’s novels epitomise the dynamics of the spirals of power-knowledge-pleasure. Power for Foucault is not “something acquired, seized or shaped”, it is “an institution and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with, it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.”⁹

In her criss-cross examination of the theme Anita Desai shows that power and sex are two well-known aspects of interpersonal relationships. Even Anita of ‘Voices in the city’ is not fortunate enough to free herself from the shackles of femininity. Desai explained an interviewer, that “every human being’s territory is really very small” and that all one can explore is “a very tiny section of this territory.”¹⁰ It is generally believed that critics adopt double standard in literary criticism to evaluate the work of men and women. As Virginia Woolf puts it, very often books are evaluated thus, “this is an important book... because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room.”¹¹ The critical review of the contemporary criticism on Indian women writers would therefore form a legitimate area for research. This would help us to identify the presence if any, of gender bias in the critical investigation of women writers. Elaine Showalter rightly says, “one of the problems of the feminist critique is that it is male oriented.”¹²

The Summum bonum of this discussion is an attempt to identify the themes, structures and language which are common to women and characteristic of them. The recurring themes of Anita Desai's novels are identified - woman's struggle for self-realization and self-definition, woman's quest for her identity, her pursuit of freedom, equality and transcendence, her rebellion and protest against oppression at every level.

Besides the recurrent themes common to women writers, feminist literary criticism also examines the gendergenre relationship and the language used by women writers. There is a quest for a feminine style and syntax. Dorothy Richardson rightly terms of her attempt to create "feminine prose" and Virginia Woolf describes "a women's sentence." Anita Desai's treatment of the women characters looks to the past to anatomise the pain inflicted on women down history, to the present in a passionate affirmation of female identity and experience. The hall-mark of Desai's fiction is "to focus on the inner experience of life."¹³ She expresses a 'uniquely Indian sensibility that is yet completely at ease in the mind of the west.'¹⁴ Spivak pleads a case for a Third world feminist criticism which will have its own concerns, priorities as well as its own means of dealing with them.

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Voice in the City : A Tour De Horizon of Existentialist Philosophy

Anita Desai is one of the literary luminaries of the contemporary fiction writing in Indian English. She has become an epoch-making voice in the realm of “creative release of the feminine sensibility”¹ which emerged after the Second World War. Being a novelist of celebrity and celestial order, Anita Desai is not pleased with the prevalent mode of novel writing. She candidly analyses the creative urge and energy of woman writing in her framework. She suggests that “with all the richness of material at hand, Indian women writers have stopped short—from a lack of imagination, courage, nerve or gusto—of the satirical edge, the ironic tone, the inspired criticism or the lyric response that alone might have brought their novels to life.”²

The mutual interaction of gender identity and national identity is bone and blood of post-colonial women’s writings. In Indian literary scenario, the crux of feminism is that the Indian woman is caught in the trap of transition from tradition to modernity. Women in literary expression reflect and represent the writer’s sense of bewilderment and vulnerability. Nevertheless, her elementary concern is to explore and to expound human psyche and self. Anita Desai in her academic discourse explains that “it has been my personal luck that my temperament and circumstances have

combined to give me the shelter, privacy and solitude required for the writing of such novels, thereby avoiding problems a more objective writer has to deal with since he depends on observation rather than a private vision.”³ it is commonly assumed that third world literature is caught in psychological realism while first world literatures have graduated into language games. In the contemporary socio-political set up the predicament of modern man does seem to be one of the dominant interests of the novelist. The most recurrent theme in her novels is the hazards and complexities man-woman relationships, the founding and nurturing of individuality, the establishing of individualism,⁴ of her characters. Albert Camus in one of his most perceptive remarks rightly underlines: “The contradiction is this: man rejects the world as it is without accepting the necessity of escaping it.” Camus further argues that “this passion which lifts the mind above the common place of dispersed world, from which it nevertheless detaches itself, is the passion for unity.” The malaise of the modern man has been inexorably aggravated by what Spengler calls, “the crisis of the present.” The contemporary era has witnessed the dissolution of old certainties and this way Paul Brunton points out, “never before were so many people plunged in so much uncertainty, so much perplexity and unsettlement.”⁵

When a man comes to realize that he is solely responsible for his decisions and destiny, he feels unnerved. This becomes instrumental in the rise of angst, which Kierkegaard calls, “anguish in the face of freedom”. To Sartre, freedom is absolute and a man can discover it if he looks inward, in case of Kierkegaard, “freedom is his bliss, not freedom to do this or that, to become king or emperor, or the exponent of public opinion but freedom to know himself that he is freedom.”⁶ Sartre in his intellectual make-up terms it as ‘Bad Faith’ because it reveals an inner disintegration in the heart of being. According to the existential theory, defying the reality with its sorrows, pain and guilt offers “existential Katharsis”.

‘Voices in the City’ as an existentialist novel dealing meticulously with the ferocious assaults of existence in the monster metropolis, Calcutta, on three major characters in the novel.

‘Voices in the City’ sketches the spiritual odyssey of a world-weary, lean and hungry looking journalist named Nirode, doomed to reside in Calcutta, the “city of death”. The novel is, in fact, a tragic exploration of personal suffering, which arises out of the feverish sensitivity of this young intellectual who has lost his way in contemporary India. It delves deep into the inner climate of youthful despair and is permeated by the existential angst. The novel is a wonderful demonstration of what Anita Desai called, “the terror of facing single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence”.⁷ ‘Voices in the City’ presents a panoramic graph of individual’s crusade against the self and the consequent defeat of the individual. This is performed primarily through the portrayal of the characters Nirode and Monisha. Monisha diagnoses the hamartia in her philosophy only too late and Nirode discovers it at the cost of a very great suffering. Amla, the third chief character happens to be their younger sister. Their mother is the fourth important character in the novel. ‘Calcutta’ where the three young people reside is also depicted as a very dominating but disastrous character affecting and influencing their respective moods and manners.

Nirode, around whom the tapestry of the novel is woven, is an angry young man, who is bright, brilliant and sensitive. Nirode, the prominent figure in the novel, is a rootless nihilist, a psychic outlaw. He wants to live in “shadows, silence, stillness”, this is what “he would always be left with”. In the very opening section of the novel he seems to have envy and hatred for his younger brother Arun who is determined for higher school studies abroad. He started his career by editing a poetry magazine of his own, but cut it short at the time it gave promise of a bright future. He does not seek happiness : “What worse death than at the hands of

happiness?" He wants to pursue failure, for happiness does not lead anywhere. The struggle for existence is too sordid and it is hardly worth the hard work. Life in Calcutta becomes a deadly horror and terror in the novel. It is thoroughly polluted and poisoned life, and any one who has breathed the air of this city is sure to be doomed. The city becomes identical with Kali, the universally acknowledged goddess of death. The paramountcy of Kali makes the vision of life as one of death and destruction and taking everyone into her deadly Jaws.

Nirode even as a protagonist is incapable of human emotions and passions. He is detached even from his mother whom he calls, "that old she cannibal". He becomes a case for a psycho-analytical study when he gives up using a family name. In addition to this, he quotes Camus again and again and introduces himself as "an outlawed hermit crab." In her calculation Monisha finds him reduced to a "shrunk, etiolated, wasted thing." Anita Desai creates a galaxy of characters that feel excruciating pain in the isolation in the suffocating darkness of their life in which no healthy communication is possible. There is a dreadful glamour in the eternal suffering the characters undergo. In the form and fashion of Kafkaesque characters, Desai's characters too suffer from the oppressive and depressive walls of sounds and smells from which there is no release. From her rich armoury of imagery, Anita Desai takes out the bird - image in order to justify the fettered condition of the human beings. Her novels such as 'cry, the Peacock', 'Bye-Bye, Blackbird', 'In Custody' are indicative of the enclosed, entrapped and encoded life of the human beings.

The novelist presents Monisha's pain and plight more comprehensively and closely relating it to the women who are like the female birds in the cages. Monisha is fearful of her involvement and has led her life, "without a touch of love or hate of warmth." Encircled in a locked container, she remains a mute spectator of

life, standing apart. As a matter of fact, she loves to realize herself as an unfettered individual and not to become at any stage a complacent, purring, tame wife who adjusts herself to a gilded cage. She is too silent for the family and the world distrusts her silence. She wants to be herself and not to compromise. The charge of theft though serves as a fictional device but it badly disturbs her status quo position at the house of her husband Jivan. She found Nirode in his pitiable condition in hospital, a blight-less broken, brother-bird at the mercy of the outer world. Theoretically, Desai invokes the *Bhagvad Gita*, which requires non-involvement if a person is to survive. For Monisha, it is a choice between emptiness or death, insignificance or oblivion, meaninglessness or hypocrisy, acceptance or death. In the ultimate analysis, she resolves her crisis by accepting life and the novel concludes with happy notes of hope for she says, "Life has always to be made possible", whereas Monisha's silence is deep-rooted.

On the structural level, 'Voices in the City' is divided into four parts, each named after the character whose mental state it projects. The section dealing with Amla is light and gay, and provides a relief after the dark and hopeless world one shares with Nirode and Monisha. In Calcutta, Amla plunges into a world of parties and gaiety trying to escape the suffering realities of life that have overwhelmed Nirode and Monisha. Amla encounters with Dharma a couple of days after her arrival in Calcutta. For Amla, this maiden meeting becomes a miraculous force, within no time she discovers herself in the image of a love—lorn maiden. She is prudent enough to know that this kind of intimacy is unrewarding and unhealthy. Dharma's paintings, "modelled on and inspired by Amla represent in a surrealistic style the psychological pulls and pressures of human life itself."⁸

To the sensible and sensitive readers Amla's sharp and bitter comments to Dharma's cruelty to his daughter too are highly

justifiable. Amla feels hurt and out of uncontrollable passion at his callousness she leaves him in disgust. Some critics also express their feeling that Dharma's behaviour is degrading so he loses her respect. After all, Amla accepts that Dharma is committed to his wife and society, and that he is a conformist who would not be able to bless her with love. Out of sheer desperation she leaves Dharma and once again falls into the pattern of life she dreads. This is the fate and future of Amla who seemed to be the only source of solace and refuge for the entire hopelessly - wrecked Ray family.

In the textual analysis 'Voices in the City' dramatises the waste land motif of the city as a place that generates aridity of feeling and frustration. Being a boy Nirode adored and admired his mother so intensely that her second marriage shattered his psyche and damaged his heart. His dandy exterior could not conceal his inner misery. Nirode, in no way, likes or loves his mother for becoming the mistress Major Chadha. Nirode's nihilism and cynicism stem from his mother's betrayal of the family prestige. His study of Camus consoles a bit as he finds it difficult to assimilate the existential postulates to his scheme of values. The Baudelaire-Camus—Gita strand in the narrative, involving Nirode and his sisters takes a dramatic turn because of the tormenting and turbulent external world. Sociologically speaking, the seedy and nauseating industrial backdrop seems to be a fatal factor in generating various kinds of mental aberrations and psychic disorders. Nirode's wounded self, Monisha's agonized self and Amla's insecure self fail to cope with the continuous violence. 'Voices in the City' perpetuates the theme of maladjusted marriage with wider aspect. Not only the husband and wife but their children, relations and friends also come under the purview of existential predicament. In the novel, black becomes the predominant colour which symbolizes the darkness, and desolation that engulfs the city of Calcutta and which adversely affects the three central characters in the novel. Philosophically, Anita Desai's novels remind the reader of the three words that

Sartre emphasizes while discussing the human condition—“anguish, abandonment and despair.”⁹ Simultaneously, the characters are privileged by having the opportunity to make or to mend their choices and lead a life of commitment and responsibility. Sartre in his existential framework rightly pin-points : “Men is nothing else but what he proposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore, nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is.”¹⁰

Sartre’s ethic of action and self-commitment reminds one of the philosophy of action presented in *the Gita*. The principal purpose of this paper is to explore or to examine some aspects of Anita Desai’s ‘Voices in the City’ in terms of existential framework. At the beginning of the novel, whether it is Nirode or Amla relishes the world of romantic idealism and ends with the discovery of the disdainful reality of life consisting in despair, destruction and death. Since a novel is not life but only an image of life ‘Voices in the City’ is Desai’s superb exploration of the whole of actuality, the urban consciousness of Calcutta. The novelist, moreover, presents the growth and maturity of individual consciousness from a cynical sense of loss of identity to the mystical realization of the meaning of existence as well as of his own destiny. The novel is a remarkable tour-de-force in its theme, treatment of the theme, a post modern novel in its knotting and knitting of narrative threads and in artistic vision.

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Rohinton Mistry's "A Fine Balance : A Slice of Middle Class Life"

'A Fine Balance' has been carved out artistically as well as cunningly by Rohinton Mistry. The novelist has covered the most volatile and violent spectrum of the contemporary history, which shook the socio-political stagnation of the country. Mistry's own concept of India in the Emergency apparently seems to be larger than life size, a mixture of joy and woe, heaven and hell. The novel is remarkably intense and enigmatic in delineating its colourful characters like shroff, Kohlah or the tailors. The hidden desires of the underdogs and their long cherished aspiration for delightful life weave the centrality of the novel. The novel brilliantly presents a panoramic picture of the poor struggling for their 'survival of the fittest' in the metropolitan city where 'a roof to cover the head' is a dream.

The novel explores a troublesome decade beginning with 1975 and concluding with an epilogue in 1984. Rohinton Mistry has taken only those facts into account, which can be helpful in portraying the gloomy and glaring saga of the country during Emergency. Thematically, the novel articulates the sagacity of the cultures which are very much suppressed. Simultaneously the novel deals with the life and longing of the middle class which craves for honour and dignity. In addition to his, the age-old problem of caste and communalism, the brunt of which has been borne by the down

trodden, has been duly focused. On and Ishwar, Shankar and Rajaram by their flamboyant actions knit and knot the texture of the novel. Mistry perceives India as "metropolitan, sophisticated noisy and angry".

Dina shroff seems to be a kernel of the novel who is destined to redeem the lot of the denied and destitute. Om and Shankar, the two tailors who, all the time, roam in Bombay to locate the whereabouts of Dina. Dina initiates her relationship by giving them the work of tailoring. Maneck Kohlah becomes a paying guest in the house of Dina. Now, the major part of the novel is replete with the life and longing in the house, in the city, in India, the novelist critically comments on the role and responsibility of Indian bureaucracy and the socio-political compulsions of the country. Dina, a kind and kindred lady, offers meal regularly of Shankar, beggars and others. Despite all the odds and obscurities, the tailors do not lose the saucy sense of humour and accept life as a token of comedy. The motto and mission in life is to enjoy the love and laughter. Tomorrow is beyond the clutch of the human hand and that may be quite late.

The novel examines the plight and pity of the poor in its graphic details in a postmodernist fashion. Surprisingly enough even the minute detail does not escapes the eagle eyes of the master craftsman, and he too does not pass a didactic note on the sad lot of mankind. The novelist has employed the wit and humour as a literary device so that the heart-rendering scenario of the Emergency may be brought into light especially for the poor like Om and Ishwar. Like Balzac, Rohinton Mistry makes 'A fine Balance' superbly a human comedy. All the accidents and the events have been skill fully narrated to focus the characters, of the two tailors and their life-styles. As a matter of fact, the good and the great find a prominence in the life of Dina whose life is committed to the cause of the humanity. The novelist, critically scrutinizes the characters who have their own status and stature where they work

and live but there characters are trying their best even outside their home. In the schema of the novel structural pattern of different societies has been perused.

'A Fine Balance', in fact, offers a sound satiric touch and tune at young Indians who desert Dina for her oven doom. Dina appears as an embodiment of purity and innocence. To Dina, this is eroticism not sainthood which is reflected by the loveable eyes of Maneck Kohlah and her two tailors, Om and Ishwar, who symbolically connote the one meaning i.e. God. Rohinton Mistry being a Parsi, has closely studied the culture and customs, traditions and life styles of Parsi community. This community is basically known for its silent suffering selfless service rendered to the nation. Parsis are the most urbanized community always opting English medium schools for its children. This is a tantalizing novel for its wit, wisdom and narratology. The novelist has used cleverness with the fine amalgamation of fun. Stylistically the novels bristling with mimicking, overstatements, exaggeration, pun and paradox which are not merely fascinating but captivating the reader's charm and choice. The character sketch is transparent, lucid and is excellently evoked by the tone and tenor of Ishwar, Om, Dina, and Maneck and by their cutting comments, which highlight the incident. The novel dramatically exposes the artistic brilliance executed in the novel to generate comic pleasure and profit. To Mistry, exaggeration is considered to be a specific comic tool away from reason and argument. Mistry strategically was a typical from of ambiguous speech full of mirth and merriment. Like Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura', Mistry's 'A Fine Balance' presents the new edition of sthalapurana'. "By this token, and augmented by 'Indianisms' and words incorporated from other Indian language", ¹ the novel develops a distinct character and identity of its own. In their works the English language is interiorised and integrated with gesture, thought and feeling. Only an Indian could have written as he has. But the sensibility that the Hinglish of Rohinton Mistry symbolizes may

nevertheless be conveyed instantly, it does not have to be translated. Indianness is a whole, manifest and palpable in the wit, humor, speech and rhythm of life lived in Mistry's fictive cosmos. Theoretically, studying and analysing the socio-cultural and socio-political situation there seems little likelihood of ejecting English without national self-harm.

In the realm of linguistic choice Rohinton Mistry is considered to be mischievous with the reader. Though he deals with the Emergency and the oppression but his language is quite soothing and sonorous. It is fundamentally a socio-linguistic import of the pluricentricity of English by examining aspects of bilingual creativity in English from the perspective within a non-native tradition of the linguistic realization. Mistry's experimental use of such a language serves two purposes. English is a symbol of linguistic imperialism while Hinglish is an attempt to get it free from the shackles of linguistic slavery. Hinglish is regarded as a union of Indian culture and western language. 'A Fine Balance' comprehensively raises and resolves the linguistic code in a justifiable manner. Through his linguistic device Rohinton Mistry crystallises this fact that novel have become a bright book of life. A close textual analysis reveals that this localization trend in English has become the most potent weapon to exploit the creative urge and stamina. This novel also approves the impact of the media regarding the coinage of the words and organization of the sentences. In the creative exploitation of the theme and thought, the right choice of language plays a key role, which enhances the readability and suitability of the novel.

Indo-Anglian writers have been handling the English language with viable competence. A few of them may have produced stylistically horrid works which are not linguistically execrable but most of the writers have also been magnificently impressive creations. Apart from so many qualities a creative work needs to have, its potency to capture the imagination of the reader is of utmost importance. The most pertinent question is whether a book

is 'readable'. The novels of R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Anita Desai have caught the critical attention of the audience for one or the other reason. "At the turn of the century, however, a new trend seems to be emerging. Marketing strategies are now as important as the contents of a book or its author. Modern technology especially the media and the Internet has played a significant role in promoting new books."²

Rohinton Mistry has used so many cliches but not in traditional form. "Knowing that the cliché cannot rest upon its laurels, he has rejuvenated these worn out expressions to fashion a new phrase and to create a bright new line."³ in fact, 'A fine Balance' is a criticism of contemporary life and literature. The summing up of the novel is excellent and nowhere the reader comes to realize whether it is the beginning or the end. Sometimes the surprise emanates from the linguistic mode of thought used by the characters that have dramatic overtones and undertones. The novel is an artistic piece of good-natured comedy and in the lightness of touch and urbanity, Rohinton Mistry may be compared to the great comic masters of English. V.K. Sunwani rightly examines the novel:

"Though it could not make it to the Booker Prize, for critics felt it was a Canadian book about India—a bit like cosmic sick joke, 'A Fine Balance' is a good read and as Mistry claims rightly, it is a fine balance between hope and despair; the novel ends certainly on an optimistic and hopeful note."⁴

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Strange Obsession : A critical Study

Shobha De burst upon the literary scene in 1988, With her tour de force “Socialite Evenings” which was followed by “starry Nights” in 1990 and “Strange Obsession” in 1992. She shot into fame and popularity on account of her thematic choice, narratology and her brilliant use of language. In the theoretical and structural analysis, her novels are considered to be the modern edition of picaresque novels. As a leading exponent of Journalism she founded and edited three covetous magazines—‘Stardust’, ‘Society’ and ‘Celebrity’ and worked in the capacity of consulting Editor to ‘Sunday’ and ‘Megacity’. Because of her profound experience as a journalist she is capable of exploring and analysing the content and context of the creativity with courage and convictions. De’s creative output seems to be a monument of her intimate understanding of the psyche and self of women.

Shobha De is considered to be an avnet garde in the realm of popular fiction writing. She also claims to be “among the first to explore the world of the urban woman in India.”¹ De’s novels and essays are supposed to be a creative endeavor to shatter patriarchal hegemony. Just after the publication of the best seller ‘Socialite Evenings De was branded as a “high society patpouri, bland and banal”, bristling with orgy laced parties and “voyeuristic servings of souped-up, four-wheel-drive-sex-in-all-direction”.² one of the critics analysed it “choked with listless lust” and criticized

its “witless dialogue.”³ Even “Starry Nights” is described as “confession of man-eater.”⁴ De’s novels are not simple a series of ‘bodice ripper.’ According to David Davidar, they are serious attempts at “discovering India through Indian eyes”.⁵ Her treatment of the “contemporary Indian woman’s challenges, predicament, values and life-style is surely not without significance.”⁶ De herself would examine the treatment of the woman question as the most significant contribution made by her work. She once said, “I write with a great deal of empathy towards women. Without waving the feminist flag, I feel very strongly about the woman’s situation.”⁷

Shobha De’s explosive novel ‘Strange Obsession’ revolves around the life and lustful relationship of two young women Amrita and Meenakshi. Fundamentally, it seems to be a psychological documentation of sexual obsession of mysterious woman Meenakshi also known as minx and her calamitous end. Amrita comes from a noble and educated family decides to search her lot in modelling. In order to execute long cherished desire she settles down in Bombay. In Bombay, she encounters with Minx, a modern and high-flown lady, free from all taboos and values. Being a daughter of Inspector General, she is always conscious of exploiting the power and position for her gimmicks. She is very much pervert and polluted in her thought and plan. Even in the initial meeting with Amrita, “Meenakshi stared into the most beautiful eyes she had ever seen and forgot what she wanted to say”. Amrita finds herself unable to conceive the unusual and crazy feeling of Minx for her. She is astonished to receive the compliments from Minx and utters: “But let alone a woman, no man had ever looked at her the way Minx just had. And no previous compliment had affected her in the same manner”. Both of them represent the different kinds of typology of modern urban set up. They seem to be hardly better than school girls playing adult games. It is through their behaviour and conversation that Shobha De throws significant light on the predicament of these two young women.

'Strange Obsession' does not deal with the struggle for power and feminism. Minx is lesbian, eccentric who behaves like a male. She is thoroughly deprived of womanliness. On the thematic plane there does not seem to be a question of power. But on the theoretical plane it is difficult to disagree with the basic questions of power pleasure as Foucault underlines. In her theoretical perspective Shobha De argues:

"Eventually, every relationship is a power struggle either on an overt or subliminal level. The very concept of the sexes locked in eternal battle is negative and destructive."⁸

In the sociological context, Shobha De's novels have emphasized the values of different socio-economic set up and the value of equivalence of power. Whenever this balance collapses, there is tension in society and double-dealings and hypocrisy predominate. Even in the relationship between Minx and Amrita, there is social and mental imbalance. The problem of social equivalence is due to different social set up. Bombay is different from Delhi. Bombay is more self-centred and profession oriented than Delhi. Karan, a photographer before snapping Amrita says, "but to me, a model is a model—a subject for my camera. Nothing more. You could be a vase of flowers or an ice cube."

Creative writing often has a two-fold dimensions. First of all it functions as a safety valve to release the pressure mounting up within the artist and secondly as a sensitive being, an artist wants to project the picture of society. Unlike E.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya who are solely devoted themselves mostly to the portrayal of socio-political reality; Shobha De goes to explore the inner and psychic reality. Her creative venture does not focus the one-tenth visible section of the iceberg that one sees above the surface of the ocean but the remaining nine-tenths of it that lie below the surface. She prefers to delve deeper

and deeper in a character or a scene, rather than going round about it. She prefers the private to the public world.

Psychologically Minx is a case in study. In psycho-analytical framework, Minx is a fit case to be treated as pervert, obsessed and crazy who manipulates Amrita, a young lady full of love, warmth and innocence. Even in fictive terms Amrita proves to be a nectar for Minx as her name connotes. Amrita, once, rebukes Minx by saying "Weird and abnormal". Minx through her shrewd effort tries to allure her:

"What are you talking about? You think I'm a bloody lesbian, don't you? Well, guess what? You are wrong. And so are all of them who have been telling you that. I'm not a dyke. I'm not Kinky. And I'm certainly not crazy... but I'm in love with you. I love you I adore you. It is not sexual. I don't wish to go to bed with you. All I want is to be around you.

Minx, knows what she is. She, consciously or subconsciously, identifies herself in negation. She is extremely passionate for Amrita and sometimes she to Sweet, becomes violent. Out of her intense sexual feeling Minx utters: "Sweet Amrita, you have become a part of me. You live right here in my body. I can feel your presence inside me all the time."

To the novelist everyone needs to get sexual encounter. It is something special, something beautiful, something shared. The woman would get sex on her terms now. The very fact, De adds, "that sex is no longer the most dreaded and despised three-letter word in India, is enough cause to celebrate".⁹ But there is nothing derogatory or clandestine in sex. In fact, sex is the bedrock of all relationships. De nowhere approves the role model of Minx. A woman cannot be contented with lesbianism, she needs to get a loving support of man. In no way, lesbianism can be a substitute

of heterosexuality. In 'starry Nights' Shobha De shows a conflict between tradition and modernity. It is true that the sexual act could not be considered as something to be avoided in life or in literature. The lower animals are there to make it as public as possible. But in his inborn sense of superiority to animals no man would accept behaving like them. Thus, through Malini in 'Starry Nights' the novelist focuses on the traditional sanctity of the sexuality though she herself does not believe in such orthodox views.

“Sex! That is all you have-sex! That is what woman like you use. Cheap bitches-part your legs any get any man in. sex, sex, sex, dirty, filthy sex!”¹⁰

It should be clear from the foregoing that literature has been protagonist of sex as against Religion and Morality. Thus in any given society, the attitude its literature shows toward sex is largely shaped by the attitude of its Religion and Morality. India has accepted sex as one of the legitimate duties of man and woman. The only restriction was that the description must be in accordance with the rules both of Kamasastra and of Rhetorics. In case of the relationship between Amrita and Minx the socio-psychological situation is altogether different. This kind of relationship even cannot be terms as adultery, incest and illegitimate rather it is something unnatural, unexpected or a part of abnormal psychology. Amrita has natural inclination for heterosexuality but Minx has almost developed abhorrence for it. She is not ready to allow Amrita to get or select a boy friend for her. Minx out of her utter possessiveness says, “I love you. I have to protect you. It's my duty.”

Minx does not have any emotional feeling for Amrita. She compels Amrita to search her love and lot in her (Minx). To Minx, same sex does not create any hurdle. Minx says, “why does it make you sick? Why should it? Because I belong to the same sex? Is

that my only sin? She too says that “there is nothing abnormal about my feeling for you. Shobha De recommends a mature attitude to sex. It is not like baby food. She says, “I love sex like I love food. It’s same sort of hunger.” But nowhere she pleads woman to woman sexuality. Minx enjoyed sexual encounter with Amrita. But just after this experience, Amrita became conscious, of her guilt. She is conscious of her sexual identity and so she raises a question to Minx when she argues for the satisfaction of Amrita, “You want a prick to enter you—I” Il go out and get one.” The woman lies in Amrita replies, “You may be able to get some quack to stitch on a plastic dick. But will that make me pregnant? Will you be able to fill my womb with a child?”

Lesbianism is a psychological perversion, an obsession and something like eccentricity. It should not be a part of feminism. Feminism as such has to attempt a new definition of woman’s lip Minx and Minx—like cannot be justified. Shobha De herself makes her stand clear when Minx’s mother says that, “My daughter is the severely disturbed child of a disturbed mother. She suffers from delusions, she tells lies, she makes up stories, the number of schools she has been expelled from have there own tales to tell.” Amrita has been saved by her husband. At last Meenakshi dies and Amrita feels liberated.

According to the feminist theory, sex does not mean sexuality or sexual preference, which stands for a person’s pattern of erotic attraction. Similarly, gender does not apparently correspond to sexuality. Robyn R. Warhol critically analyses this complexity :

“...A person of the female sex who is erotically attracted primarily to persons of her own sex (who may or may not refer to herself as lesbian, another term whose definition is under debate within feminism, might be either strongly feminine or strongly masculine in her gendered self-

presentation, or most likely—her gender identity would, like most homosexual persons, be made up of a complicated combination of gender “differences within”.¹¹

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The God of Small Things : A Novel of Poetic Narratology and Lawrentian Ecstasy

English is not recognized as the first language of Arundhati Roy but it is undeniably manifested that non-native speakers too can handle the English language to give vent to their creative eruptions and expressions with equal, if not more, felicity of narrative speakers. Arundhati Roy, a Booker prize winner is, indeed, superb in exploiting and exploring and the linguistic competence, pliancy, in English language to effectively, communicate their creative urge. Her creative work is psychologically and culturally rooted in Indian soil through the medium of English. It capitalizes the fact that Arundhati Roy like a nightingale does not afford to forget the roots, even when it flies to heights hitherto unknown. Her magnum opus debut 'The God of Small Things' is a shining and scintillating example of a native genius that prefers to communicate in a second language other than her mother tongue. Actually a poetic novel is the graphic details of the writer's visual sense and his/her perception of relationship behind and below the conscious level. The subconscious layer replete with unacknowledged emotions and passions can excellently be discussed by poetry, and not by prose. 'The God of Small Things' is imbued with large number of poetic phenomena like intensity of situation, moments of crisis, strange emotions, extensive use of symbols and images, imaginative scenes

and situations, intensely emotional and imaginative moods of characters which Virginia Woolf call 'persuasive mood'.

Like Virginia Woolf, Arundhati Roy conceives the novel as the one bright book of life which is more than philosophy, science or any other book and life for her is a coin, which has both obverse and reverse. Her extraordinary art lies in her dazzling potency to illuminate and illustrate both the sides simultaneously. The vision and variety of life she presents, her understanding and analysis of circumstances, her insight and intensity into the characters and her knack of investing mundane and morbid events crystallize her novel into poetic odyssey. Artistically, 'The God of Small Things' is characterized as 'fine web of poetry. It is worthwhile to suggest that aesthetic evaluation, to a great extent is dependent on a logical interpretation of its phonetic, grammatical and lexical constitution. An excellent analysis of literature depends on the indispensable and vital linguistic studies plus other semantic, aesthetic and emotive values. In the linguistic interpretation of the text Beth Yahp considers it, "Verbal Wizardry"¹ for its non-conventional and unacceptable grammatical expressions.

In the structural schematization of the novel, the novelist enjoys poetic license and scrutinizes her 'speech level' and 'pre-speech level' expressions in the tradition of stream of consciousness novels. 'The God of Small Things' syntactically breaks the "conventional rules of grammar and syntax, abandons orthodox punctuation coins neo-logism, imports typographical devices, runs sense impressions together with syn aesthetic richness."² The rich and resourceful unconventional verbal tapestry, very innovative in nature, captivates the ebb and flow of emotions. The commanding poetic mode finds full rhythm through the resonance of words. Her poetic passages are powerfully packed with present participle words emphasize the contour of consistency and it is elegantly juxtaposed with words that stand in binary opposition in content.

M. Adhikari examines linguistic narratology of 'The God of Small Things' in her critical perspective:

"...The choice of words loaded with meaning with a rise and fall of notes produces fine rhythm, metaphors and similes become the integral part of the prose. Roy begin's the novel by following the rule of conventional grammar but very soon, she moves into the sphere of arbitrary or so-called ungrammatical sentences.By creating new nouns and names, she is not only projecting the psychology of children but also constructing arbitrary signifiers that present 'situational meanings for Estha and Rahel. The game of pronunciation though bends the rules of grammar yet it projects reality More closely than ever. To the reader it signifies disunion, estrangement, feud, rupture, compartmentalization and many other nuances of division and incompatibility. ...Definitely perceptible in Roy's prose is the quality of hybridization, a mark of post colonial fiction."³

The novel has instantly evoked enough puzzles and riddles which have amply been publicized, are the Booker citation itself. "Her narrative crackles with riddles and yet tells its tale quite clearly. We were all engrossed by this moving novel."⁴ The book is memorable not only for its "extraordinary linguistic inventiveness" but also for its technique. Indeed Arundhati Roy attaches much significance to the structure and style, the narrative mode of the novel emanates emphatically in her interview to Alixir Wibur. "For me language is a skin on my thought and I was thinking about it as a story, and was thinking of a way of telling it."⁵ A fundamental facet of narrative technique is the point of view from which the story is told. The presiding point of view of the story telling is that of the twins Estha and Rahel plus unconventionality of the structure, scope and sphere of the narrative which fairly recognizes Roy's book as daringly post

modernist. The book convincingly weaves the saga of a family, of three generations living in the Ayemenem House in Kottayam, a memento microscoped in time, which irrevocably moves towards its doomed destiny. The narrative strategy of this work of art nullifies time and invests a poly temporal scheme of time where there is a constant shift from the past to the present and to the future. It problematises chronology and history. Actually what the text purports is not the reality of history but the reality of human sensibility and society. The nucleus of the novel is sexual encounter between Ammu and the untouchable Velutha culminating into their separate and sad demise. The woman's point of view exposes the very roots of an authoritative exploitative socio-economic-political structure that victimises both man and woman and ties both to its stakes. The second is the sad drowning of the Anglo-Indian girl Sophia Mol in the Meenchal River during holiday. There has been a correlation between the first and the second; the third strand of action constitutes traumatic childhood of the Siamese twins Estha and Rahel. The novelist adequately focuses the memorable action of the twins is that of the coming back of young Rahel from America to Ayemenem and her incestuous and immoral encounter with Estha, the twin.

Structurally and thematically the book is designed to be an eye catching and challenging. The novelist herself reveals her approach.

“For me the structure of my story, the way it reveals itself was so important ...I really took a lot of care in designing the structure of the story, because for me the book is not about what happened but how what happened affected people.”⁶

It has been widely acknowledged that the perspective is basically directed at the very character of a society and culture, deeply held beliefs, thought patterns, substantive values and

relations. Thus the free of love and sex takes a turbulent and tormenting turn in the ultimate affect of the novel. Most of the chapters of the novel are pregnant with the chain of actions like Sophia Mol's funeral, the twins' birth, saby Kochamma and her past, Velutha's death, Rahel's marriage and divorce, the twins early education, Ammu's death, comrade pillai's role. Ayemenem House-all are introduced in the first chapter itself.

In the Introduction of the well received book "Orientalism" Edward said has illustrated the inclusion of native words in a foreign language text which points out not only the mastery of the author but also the device to suggest the typical nuances of words and profound reactions of a culture. Said rightly suggests that "The images, themes, motifs that circulate in the text can be useful indicators of its ideological underpinnings."⁷ In her novel Roy creates images which are primarily based on Indian experiences like the drowned child's skin being as wrinkled as the 'Dhobi's finger (14) or Estha's feeling of betrayal of Velutha 'like a mango hair between the molars' (32). Stylistically her crisp and racy language, similes and metaphors are very accurate and illuminating. For example, "Rahel's new teeth were waiting inside her gums, like words in a pen (p.37). A.N. Diwedi says:

"Obviously, her spicy and racy style is her forte. Her language is uttered with south Indian names and nuances, which call for a suitable glossary to precisely explain them to her readers, especially the western ones. Her prose is appearing, having the hurried motion of a swiftly flowing stream, but at times it becomes wordy and rhetorical."⁸

In her unique creative venture which has been started in 1980s Roy completed *The God of Small of Things* in 1997 by using cinematic techniques in her story telling—time shifts, endless fast

forwards and reversals, rapid editing etc. It has aptly been suggested that “ apart from character and space, time becomes a decisive factor in the narrative structure of the novel. The Indo-Anglian novelists are conscious of the significance of the novel’s time structure and have been successful in integrating either the cyclic or the linear concept of time with the oral or the mythological narrative modes.”⁹ There is no linear structuring of events not in just the story of the novel but also within the individual streams of narrative. On both the planes of style and theme Arundhati Roy bears a comparison with D.H. Lawrence. In Lawrentian works of art, the lyrical ecstasy and spontaneity comes out from tenderness in human relationship and phallic consciousness. Lawrence seeks himself morbid and monotonous with the contemporary sterility in the field of novel writing and switches over to the most delicate and delightful relationship between man woman, the simplest and surest way of achieving the state of ‘the spontaneous creative fullness of being’. Lawrence’s ‘Lady Chatterley’s lover’ is the hallmark of narrative tenderness, the genuine and profound sex relationship, the novel is full of spontaneous exuberance of tender and titillating sexual rhythms. Connie Chatterley like Ammu is the central figure of the novel, is the gift of writer’s poetic imagination. When she marries Clifford, her love is based on ‘all the passion of mental attraction. With the passage of time, she thinks of her life with Clifford as yeans of suffocating and suffering and the singular reality about it is ‘nothingness: Similar is the case with Ammu when she gets herself united in wedlock with the assistant manager of Assam tea garden and finally returns Ayemenem House by deserting her husband. As Ammu attracts towards Velutha, Connie falls in the game of love with the gamekeeper Mellors. In a state of ecstatic compassion, the keeper takes Connie to the hut and their love bursts forth with the sexual intercourse, which justifies ‘nothing’ to her, but it imparts perennial peace. This ecstatic pleasure of sex and love vivify and vitalize their life force.

In the poetic description Arundhati Roy evinces her craftsmanship in explaining erotic and emotional scenes in the last chapter 'The Cost of Living' where man - woman relationship finds full consummation. Ammu, the mother of the twins has been depicted as a day - dreamer, an abandoned woman, she remains unrequited biologically. Roy in weaving the character of Ammu is more woman like, more attached, mere earthy, more natural. Velutha, the titanic figure resembles Lawrence's keeper fills the love vacuum of Ammu. In the concluding chapter 'The Cost of Living' the intense passionate affair between Velutha and Ammu inside the river Meenachal is described in terms of Lawrentian flavour and fragrance. Biologically Ammu's response to Velutha's muscular, well-built body is spontaneous because her suppressed womanhood is aroused after a long span of time. But the caste ridden male chauvinistic socio-sexual set up does not provide such relaxation for human considerations. Her night elopement with him for thirteen days under the threat of incessant heavy down pour due to cyclonic disturbances give her sexual saturation. The stolen hours of the night simultaneously satiate and further sharpen her desire for sexual intimate assuagement. Ammu, to some extent is nymphomaniac in her relationship with Velutha. The novelist describes this Lawrentian explosive sexual encounter in tantalizing details. The writer says:

"Ammu, naked now, crouched over Velutha, her mouth on his. He drew her hair around them like a tent.... She slid further down, introducing herself to the rest of him. His neck. His nipples. His chocolate stomach. She sipped the last of the river from the hollow of his novel. She pressed the heat of his erection against her eyelids. She tasted him, salty, in her mouth.... She felt his belly tighten under her, hard as board. She felt her wetness slipping on his skin. He took her nipple in his mouth and cradled her other breast in his calloused palm. Velvet gloved in sand paper.

At the moment that she guided him into her, she caught a passing glimpse of his youth, his youngness, the wonder in his eyes at the secret he had unearthed and she smiled down at him as though he was her child”.

Arundhati Roy in her well thought out schema deliberates the same philosophy as D.H.Lawrence explores in the ‘Lady Chatterley’s lover’ Connie almost like Ammu has the similar feeling of real birth and integrated woman. Lawrence presents a panoramic picture of man-woman encounter:

“And she felt him like a flame of desire, yet tender and she felt herself melting in the flame....

And it seemed she was like the sea, nothing but dark waves rising and heaving.... Oh, and far down insides her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-travelling billows, and ever, at the quick of her, the depths parted and rolled asunder, from the centre of soft plunging, as the plunger went deeper and deeper, touching lower, and she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed, and heavier the bellows of her rolled away to some shore, uncovering her, and closer and closer plunged the palpable unknown, and further and further rolled the waves of herself away from herself, leaving her, till suddenly in a soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman.

It is, moreover in the third successive sexual intercourse that Connie’s all consciousness is gone. The unfathomable, unspeakable, blissful charm and gaiety is lyrically delineated by Lawrence in the following words. He says:

“And this time his being within her was all soft and iridescent, purely soft and iridescent, such as no consciousness could seize. Her whole self quivered unconscious and alive, like plasm. She could not know what it was. She could not remember what it had been. Only that it had been more lovely than anything ever could be. Only that. And afterwards she was utterly still, utterly unknowing, she was not aware for how long. And he was still with her, in as unfathomable silence along with her. And of his they would never speak.”

Arundhati Roy and D.H. Lawrence in their works of art use remarkable poetic language, their medium of communication approximates to that of poet. They find the common language as if it were their own invention, and employ words and their sound patterns to suggest the meaning poetically. In the ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’ Connie has nothing to pay for her free and fearless game of sex owing to the socio-cultural ethical morality of the west but in Indian perspective the situation is diametrically different where Ammu has to pay even life for it.

She is forced to vacate Ayemenem house by Chacko and she also gets separated from her affectionate children to die unwept, unhonoured, using and unremembered. Actually, she is more sinned against than sinning. No doubt, sad, sorrow, gloom and grief sound too much in the novel. Ammu and her Siamese twins have to suffer the traumatic experience of separation and self-alienation. ‘The History House’ becomes connotations of a bizarre, haunted place where heart rendering scenes of police atrocity, socially prohibited sexual assuagement between Velutha and Ammu and the tragic drowning of Sophie Mol occur. The smelly, perverse behaviour of Murlidhavan—the orange drink and lemon drink Man in the Abhilash Talkies—handing over his penis into Estha’s hand saying the latter to move it up and down till the seminal discharge further deepens the down slide destitute of mankind’s to which the

children of the locality become a prey.

The brother-sister physical reunion after a considerable gap of twenty-three years in Ayemenem suggests an unusual, socially impermissible incident at a rainy, wet night. What prompts them to this act is not “happiness but hideous grief.” In the heart of this artistic framework four women characters are shown grappling with problems and plights of life and being repeatedly defeated. Among these four women characters Ammu, Margaret, Rahel and Baby Kochamma some succumb, suffer and finally die in the deplorable condition and some live death in life. Arundhati Roy herself focuses on this endless suffering of the women characters in the following words at Frankfurt World Book Fair in October 1997:

“‘The God of Small Things’ is indeed a poetic yet sad book,” and somehow the sadness of the book is what stays with me.”

Technically ‘The God of Small Things’ stands close to ‘The Guide’ of R.K.Narayan especially in the use of all these ‘flash on’ and ‘flash back’ technique. In the double time scheme ‘The Guide’ also moves backward and forward like ‘The God of Small Things’. Arundhati Roy herself explores the ploy temporal theory of time, which has been used in the thematic structure of the novel. She says:

“The way an architect designs a building... it was not as if I started at the beginning and ended at the end. I would start somewhere and I’d colour in a bit and then I would deeply stretch back and then stretch forward. It was like designing an intricately balanced structure.”¹⁰.

A number of sympathetic critics have explained the greatness of Roy’s novel in terms of her ability to display contradictory social and psychic elements which, when perceived in terms of deep

structure, attain a unity. This all happens feasible due to the twisting capacity of the novelist—twisting the word or words in such a remarkable manner that it loses its place and identity. C.D.Narasimhaiah rightly suggests:

“We soon become aware the novelist has a palpable design — to create an effect, not by her keenness of observation of what is there but by the manipulation of words—the words don’t mediate experience as she is busy peddling them. Consequently what started, as a place in the first two sentences (of chapter 1) becomes any place, withers seeking in vain to invest airy nothing with a local habitation and a name. This is so in both the paragraphs. ‘Mental bombasts’ as Coleridge would have called it, with a feeling for words, not into them.”¹¹

Throughout the novel it seems that it is a unique experimentation of words and images. Both manner and matter are grandiose, superb and befitting to the theme of the novel. The egg—twins through which the story has been filtered embodies a post structuralist exercise of mind as well as a ruling class in transition from one type to another. They are an apt symbol of the over intellectualized and emotionally paralyzed humanity of the present age. Though they voice to a certain extent the views of the novelist, they are not puppets but flesh and blood creatures. They are the individualistic persona given to choices, which they deliberately make. The novel thus has a multiple perspective as also a self-confessional autobiographical focus. Roy has manifested artistically a device to probe the minds and moods of her characters. This device helps the novelist to explore the psyche of the characters, giving them the three dimensional depth. Arundhati Roy justifies the Lawrentian approach that the closest human intimacy is possible only through sexual intercourse, an experience that is marked by a momentary but complete unity of man and woman and of the

two with the very soul of life. The novel is highly poetic not only on the plane of theme, words, language and style but also in the selection of the title. The title of the novel is elegantly suggestive, a pointer to this fact, who is this 'God of Small Things?' As the text points out:

The God of less? The God of Small Things? The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles?

This God is undoubtedly associated with Ammu's dreamland. The little dreams constitute an integral part of 'Small Things'. Hence Ammu dreams of the one armed man—who is he? Is he Velutha, the paravanu—are directly related with 'The God of Small Things'. Ammu craves for this man feverishly and aches for him with the whole of her biology. Evidently the title purports that these two lovers in life exercised 'Small Things' secretly because society would not permit them. The novelist says:

"...They stuck to the Small Things. The Big Things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So, they stuck to the small things."

The title of the book itself is pregnant with poetic poise where the 'Small Things' denotes the sublimation of sexual desire. The title is also a complementary to the poetic design of a novel, a hint to the palpable love of Ammu and Velutha. This is the He - Man - Velutha, a love -light and 'The God of Small of Things' for Ammu.

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Manju Kapur's 'Difficult Daughters': A Saga of Conflict and Crisis

At the dawn of the twenty first century Indian English novelists have been acclaimed as avant-garde in the world of creativity. Most of the literary stars and stalwarts have consolidated their position and contributed immensely to Indian English literature and learning in the recent past. In the post colonial era partition has ever been the most prolific and prominent area for the creative writers. There are a lot of books designed and devoted to articulating and analysing the partition text and context. R.K. Dhawan, a critic of repute rightly focuses the historical trauma snapped and enlarged by the camera of the creative eyes:

“A number of novels were written on the theme of partition, the destruction it brought and the plight of the refugees. They faithfully record the reign of violence that characterized the period and provide a sad, telling commentary on the breakdown of human values. A strain of despair and disillusionment is predominant in these novels.”¹

Manju Kapur, a noteworthy story teller who without linguistic jugglery and gimmickry presents the post modern novel in a traditional narrative thread. ‘Difficult Daughters’ manifests

autobiographical data and dimension in its syntactic norms and nuances. The novelist herself asserts that “conflict between daughter and mother is inevitable and I suppose I was a difficult daughter. The conflict carries on through generations because mothers want their daughter to be safe. We want them to make the right choices—‘right’ in the sense that they are socially acceptable. My mother wanted me to be happily married, I want my daughters to have good jobs.”²

To Irigaray the beginning of patriarchy as everybody knows represents man as the legal head of the family or state coincided with the weakening of the female-female bond and especially the dissolution of the mother-daughter relationship. “This relationship was destroyed to establish an order linked to private property and to the transmission of possessions within a male genealogy. Such a system ensured that property and children belonged to the same genealogy.”³ In this factual framework, the texture of the novel has been knitted and knotted around a panjabi family consisting women of consecutive three generations. The novelist begins the novel in an unconventional manner with a cryptic statement: “The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother.” The gamut of the story revolves around Ida, the narrator and a divorcee, Virmati her mother gets herself engaged in marital knot with professor for love, and Kasturi, her grandmother who comes to terms with a difficult daughter, Virmati. The crux of the novel is the troublesome life and sad demise of Virmati, the central character. Ida wittingly expresses that she would not like to be a replica of her mother as her mother did not imitate her own mother. So, the novelist in her narrative schema weaves the plot of the novel and tells the story of Ida’s mother Virmati. By giving full honour to Virmati’s will, her dead body has been consigned to flame. Virmati in her life time used to utter “that some one will value me after I have gone.” The story moves ahead when Ida, the ever lonely daughter visits Amritsar and peeps into the past of her mother’s life. She comes

to acknowledge the girlhood of her mother and her typical motherhood looking for her daughter's safety. In a unique fashion narratology develops by co-existing past and present spade in spade. Ida collects clippings and cuttings of Virmati's life from kith and kin.

Virmati, the protagonist is the eldest daughter among her ten brothers and sisters. Thus, Kasturi, the mother of Virmati is addressed as ever pregnant woman. Her grandfather is a reformer and renowned landowner who attaches much importance to education with women. His sons look after the jewellery business. In a very traditional pattern Virmati assists her ever pregnant mother in a domestic affair, caring the younger children and their studies. The family set up is thoroughly conservative so Virmati's family takes her to be eligible for marriage as she has expertised herself in stitching, cooking and reading. This is the focal point where the novel takes a dynamic turn. The new education and the life of Kasturi generate a new urge and emotion in Virmati to get herself free from the bondage of patriarchy that denies or deserts her freedom and choice. Her marriage is final with Inderjit but it is postponed because of the death of his father. She does not think of the marriage and child bearing just after the high school qualification. She falls in love with the romantic Oxford-returned professor Harish Chandra who lives next door and is already married. The professor has illiterate but gentle wife, a daughter and lives with his mother and daughter. The professor seeks an intellectual companion in Virmati and Virmati's self-affirmation is accentuated by the professor's passion for her. Their love blossoms and after a hitch culminates into marriage. Prior to marriage, Virmati finds herself in a quandary because of her boring family duty, the desire to study and illicit affair.

The story further takes a new turn when Virmati out of utter frustration and strain of daily life attempts suicide but is rescued.

Her younger sister Indumati unites in wedlock with Inderjit and Virmati is confined in a storehouse. Virmati and the professor continue their exchange of love letters through the youngest sister Paro. Kasturi tries her best to enable Virmati to succumb to the wishes of the family, but of no use. Virmati is committed to continue her study at Lahore. Virmati becomes centre of focus because of her revolutionary zeal and gusto. She neither yields to the age old traditions of Arya-Samaj family nor marry to the person with whom she is engaged to. Once the professor visits her in Lahore and Virmati becomes pregnant. Virmati thinks of her own love while the entire nation is entrapped by the feat and fever of freedom movement. The novelist says:

“Strikes, academic freedom, the war, peace, rural upliftment....Independence Day, Movement, rally, speeches... an outcaste amongst all women. She thought of Harish who loved her. She must be satisfied with that.

Virmati finds that women around her are sincerely engrossed in the freedom struggle and she is absorbed in her business of love with professor Harish Chandra. She thinks for abortion and then goes to Amritsar and joins as a principal of a school where professor continues his visit. Virmati resolves that if professors does not accept her she will desert him for good but eventually he gives his consent and both of them unite in nuptial tie and she comes to Harish Chandra's house as his second wife. Virmati's humble and heroic suffering in order to procure her love and marriage with the professor who is already married to Ganga and has a child symbolizes her assertiveness and 'self' who is destined to carve out a niche for herself. Suman Bala and Subhash Chandra rightly analyses the man-woman relationship in their theoretical formulation and both of them argue:

“But her acceptance of the treatment meted out to her by

her lover, the professor totally belies these expectations. The professor's pursuit of Virmati even after she has been sent to Lahore as a part of punishment to study in women's college, his renewing sexual relations with her with full ardor, but his reluctance and constant postponing of the marriage in spite of her frequent entreaties to do so, are instances of the gratification of the male 'desire'. Male ego-centricism blinds men to the situation of women, who may be placed in agonizing circumstances an account of their relationship with men."⁴ Intellectually it can be argued that the professor Harish Chandra enjoys the bliss of both the worlds: Ganga as a maid servant who fulfils his everyday needs, keeps his house tidy and his clothes washed and Virmati who satisfies his academic urge which the professor cannot seek in his meek and mild Ganga.

Though Virmati succeeds to marry the professor yet she does not secure any space for herself in the family. Ganga and Harish's mother compel Virmati to lead a suffocating life in the tight walls of the house. It is significant to note that Virmati who gets high education despite social odds and obscurities aspires to play the traditional role of a house wife so that she may look after the mundane needs of her husband but she is not allowed to. She is not even acknowledged for her intellectuality on the other hand harish commands respect for his scholastic ideas and ideologies. At times it seems that Harish and Virmati as a couple does not have mutual companionship. In a wife-husband gossip when Virmati suggests a name for their forthcoming baby that has been dispassionately rejected by the professor. The professor was not considerate and calm in his decision and he also inflicts a long lecture on Virmati in order to silence her. Apparently the novel does not seem to profess or propagate feminist outlook but there is an undercurrent feminine point of view which gives a serious touch to the story. Vandita Mishra

rightly argues:

“Kapur never permits Virmati any assertion of power or freedom. Because even as she breaks free from old prisons, she is locked into newer ones. Her relationship with the professor, for instance. While it does provide an escape from a loveless arranged marriage; it is itself furtive and claustrophobic, offering only a stolen togetherness behind curtained windows. Even years of studying and working alone do not give her the confidence to strike independent roots and grow. She hovers uncertainly at the edge of each new world, never entering, lest the professor should call and not find her near. Eventually, marriage to the man of her choice is no triumph either. As second wife, she must fight social ostracism outside the house, and compete for the kitchen and conjugal bed with Ganga, the first wife, inside it.”⁵

Virmati's father becomes a victim of communal frenzy but she is not allowed to attend and mourn. What a fun it is! The professor participates in the funeral ceremony but not Virmati, the daughter of the deceased. Kasturi blames Virmati for the trauma. In a topsy-turvy situation Virmati plans to do her master degree. After completing her M.A. when she returns, she comes to know that all the members of the family have gone to Kanpur because of communal tension. Meanwhile Virmati gives a birth to her daughter Ida, the narrator. Virmati never corresponds to the age-old family tradition but paradoxically she persuades Ida to make herself fit into the channel of the family. In her futile attempt she tries to keep her under control. Ida emerges as a woman of uncontrollable passion who is left alone having no issue, “engulfed in melancholy, depression and despair.”

The tapestry of the novel is structured around the dooms day of partition but it does not explicate the tragedy of it. Thematically

the novel purports a romantic story of Virmati but the heroine herself creates a scene of partition. In the chain growth of events and eventualities Virmati becomes the difficult daughter for her mother as well Ida for her. 'Difficult Daughters' has undeniably an autobiographical tinge and touch. Sumita Pal rightly focuses the autobiographical elements in the novel:

"Like Virmati, Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar and teaches in college. Her family were victims of partition and was Arya-Smajis like Virmati's family. Manju Kapur's father too was a professor, like Virmati's husband. Manju Kapur admits that she herself had been a difficult daughter for her mother whose priority was marriage and she, in turn wants her daughters to have good jobs."⁶

In its stylistic devices the novel is straightforward, startling and evocative of Virmati's pains, puzzlings and torn-personality. The uses of Punjabi idioms, and phrases manifest the linguistic colour and contour of the novel and make it a wonderful work of art. It is rightly examined that "Indo-English is developing a distinct character and identity as distinct as American English, British English, Australian English. Style in a novel generally depends upon the writer's settled conviction of the single, unambiguous nature of his materials and of the novel's adequacy as vehicle for their serious presentment."⁷

Really it is a troublesome task to analyses and estimates the relationship between Virmati and the professor, which has ever been passionate yet misleading and mismatching. Whenever Virmati gets herself in emotional crisis the psycho-therapy of the professor meted out to her is not titillating. In his love letters to Virmati, the professor does not think of necessary to mention Ganga and her pregnancy. In fact, Virmati's visits to Lahore and Nahan have been sensitized and scandalized by a trip of the

professor. Virmati's academic temperament goes in oblivion before the intellectual height of the professor. The professor neither visualizes the sociological fact nor emotional intensity of Virmati. He lacks objective correlation in the game of love and everyday life. Virmati like Manisha in Anita Desai's 'The Voices in the City' raises million dollar question through her endurance, passive suffering and suicidal attempt. Virmati's case is very akin to Manisha. Virmati attempts suicide and survives but Manisha commits suicide. Both of the protagonists around whom the story rotates have their own urge and argument shaking and stirring the contemporary social engineering. Woman's voice against injustice and inequality tends to unravel the fact that feminism is the consequence of the culture or society shaped and governed by men to suit their needs and interests regardless of women's basic needs and happiness. In this man made society everything is meant for the pleasure and profit of male sexuality.

In the de facto summing up, the novel can be synthesized in the utterance of angry Ida:

"This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word—brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama and leave me be. Do not haunt me any more."

Throughout in the novel Ida's declaration echoes that she does not want to be like her mother. The novelist scrutinizes a pertinent and persuasive subjects like self-affirmation, man-woman relationship, and family-feud and above all the mother-daughter conflict and contradiction. The novel without any literary snobbery deals with a daughter's reorganization of her fractured and fragmented past hinging on her mother's story. The writer has all the fact and finesse of the great classical masters like Dickens, Jane

Austen and Emily Bronte in creating and producing efficacious result.

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Kalet Do Scopic Dimensions of Indo-Anglian novel Criticism : From Colonialism to Post Colonialism

Although the Indo-Anglian novel criticism has been a relatively delayed manifestation of the modern Indian sensibility, it has always been *raison* both in an artistic delineation of the contemporary social reality and also in reflecting the changing national tradition. “But in pre-independence Indian change symbolizes freedom from alien rule and the negation of a feudal mode of production.”¹ In India where the people were now experiencing for the first time the phenomenon of large scale and sustained social mobility, it is perhaps understandable that most Indo-Anglian novels are plotted in the form of a journey. The Indo-Anglian novel criticism made its first uncertain but significant start in the thirties when most of the vernacular literatures in India were depicting and reflecting the universal consciousness of change as well as the constantly expanding horizons of national aspiration. “The Indo-Anglian novel has been a product of change, it has also become the major vehicle of the consciousness of that change.”²

The ‘pink-thirties’ has been an era of experiment and expansion of novel theory and literary criticism. This is the era when

Indian novel writing in English has also acquired independent existence in the complex body of Indian literature, providing as it were a direct access to the Indian mind and heart. Thus it is by no means an irrelevant undertaking for a serious student of literature to venture an exploratory analysis of the Indo-Anglian novel in terms of the cultural values and the patterns of change that have affected them.

However it was felt that it was only in the 1960s that the sensibility of Indo-Anglian novel criticism crystallized into what may be called a post-independence sensibility. This new sensibility is eclectic, it is radically democratic, and it rejects what it sees as the exclusivist and repressive character of liberal humanism and the institutions with which it identifies that humanism. Meenakshi Mukherjee critically explains the fiction of this period, "has turned introspective and the individual's quest for the Indo-Anglian writer."³ In these circumstances it is very hard for a critical tradition to emerge alongside the creative tradition. G.N. Devy is very much objective when he seeks to have had his own critical parameter in the multiculturalism and multilingualism of Indian society. He peeps through the perspective of literature and literary criticism having insight in the modern transformations for the useful function and practice of literary criticism. And this way, "that perspective will make it easier for Indian critics to propose theoretical formulations."⁴

In fact, criticism of criticism is an inherently tricky affair. In proportion to the growth of interest that occurred in recent years in the theory of literature, criticizing the criticism is increasingly the pivotal thing. With the expansion of the empire of Critical Theory, the hazards of discussing literary criticism have in no way declined. Thus as enthusiasm for theory has grown, so correspondingly has a powerful belief in the existence of a modern "crisis in literary studies." In its turn, this belief has helped to justify the inclusion of

the study of theory while propagating the view that debate about literary criticism has reached an exceptionally lively pitch. Philip Smallwood in his critical inquiry finds this crisis of critical theory in the interests of the institutions in which the academic study of criticism and literature takes place. So, "it is equally in the interests of those institutions that the source of crisis should be regarded as theory."⁵ The patient historical spadework done by Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar, the enthusiastic critical output by Meenakshi Mukherjee, R.K. Dhawan and the sensitive evaluations of individual writers and works presented by Prof. C.D. Narasimhiah, M.K. Naik and others have compelled our attention to the critical viability of studying this body of literary works. Some critics are very much anxious in their critical investigation by following the New critical standards where an Indian school of writing in English is at the moment more of an illusion than of reality, more of promise than an achievement.

In fact, the incompatibility between literature and literary theory in India has a different character. It presents not only philosophic and aesthetic problems but also problems emanating from the politics of culture. In this way, Edward said's views on the effects of orientalism, imperialism and culture which were a mental construct of the colonizers was also served by the colonized. He critically analyses the complexity of culture and argues:

"Culture, of course, is to be found operating Within civil society, where the influence of Ideas, of institutions, and of other persons Works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent.... It is hegemony, or Rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, That gives orientalism the durability and the Strength"⁶.

Like Edward said, Ashis Nandy's sterling remarks always

incisive and bristling offer the most forceful contestation to ensconced hegemonies, in India or elsewhere. Nandy's plea for participatory democracy, for the pluralization and politicization of systems of knowledge and modes of social intervention strike a note of hope. The "clan vital of" Indian culture lies not so much in a unique ideology as in society's traditional ability to live with cultural ambiguities to use them to build psychological and even metaphysical defences against cultural invasions."⁷

Culture is very much a *sine qua non* for fresh historicism without which critical theory cannot come to existence. Nandy echoes the same thing in his critical framework as Ngugi wa Thiong'o suggests but in different mood. "The very words we use are a product of collective history."⁸

The moods stimulated by Edward said's orientalism which have been transplanted to south Asia by Partha Chatterjee and the later volumes of subaltern studies have provided for many intellectuals an overall critical infrastructure that combines the virtues of apparent radicalism with a satisfactory distance from the Marxism of Yesteryear, now widely assumed to be finally and deservedly dead. Sumit Sarkar in his well received work candidly examines this issue and finds that to a great extent, "Pervasive colonial cultural domination has naturally paid considerable attention to the development of 'modern attitudes towards history, and in fact this provides at first sight exceptionally suitable material for a colonial discourse approach"⁹. In fact, the dilemma of modernism has always been exasperating the writers operating in the modern Indian fictional scene. R.K. Dhawan rightly argues, "The Indian academic who makes use of a Percy Lubbock or a Mark Schorer does not find any fictional modernity in Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath and Premchand the great trio who laid the foundations of the Indian modern fiction."¹⁰

In addition to this, it would also have been interesting to have had Anita Desai's reflections on the kind of impact. In her introduction to the selections from G.V. Desai, R.K. Narayan, Gita Mehta, Salman Rushdie, Bharti Mukherjee, Amitabh Ghosh and herself, she considers the point that Indian writing is impelled by the desire to convey an underlying unity of the scene, a unity that belies the fissiparousness of the Indian scene. K.N. Pahikkar in his critical survey too does not deny the early influence of English but "novell as a literary form was not generated exclusively by an external stimulus, it was rooted in the intellectual needs and aesthetic sensibility of the burgeoning middle class."¹¹

In fact the most basic task of the sociology of culture is as Raymond William suggests, "is analysis of the inter relationships within the complex unity: a task distinct from the reduced sociology of institutions, formations and communicative relationships radically distinct from the analysis of isolated forms."¹² Though there is no self-professed Marxist group of critics in Indo-Anglian literary criticism yet the impact of structuralist Marxist criticism is quite discernible in the writings of modern generation. A brilliant Marxist D.D. Koshambi critically views history "as the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means of relations of production."¹³

Among the Indo-Anglian critics the central problem of the dialectical relationship between ideology and criticism does play an important part which is more apparent in the inquiry of Patricia Waugh, "to see where it is going, to find out what it is"¹⁴. In 1977 in a lecture, on "The Indian Critical Heritage :Its Relevance Today", C.D.Narasimhaih formally argue this case with reference not to Indian literature alone, but also Anglo-American:—This meta critical problem—-which is the appropriate Poetics?—-is not at all helped by the understandable though regrettable paucity of Meta criticism? C.D. Narasimhaih is very much inquisitive "to bring the

native tradition/poetics back or rather to relate Indian Poetics in some measure and in some meaningful way.”¹⁵ Terry Eagleton too rejects the existing position by expressing his crisscross ideas that “different historical periods have constructed a different Homer and Shakespeare for their own purposes.”¹⁶

Both Eagleton and Narasimhaih is identical with iconoclastic views to investigate the function of criticism. Even the most original of the twentieth century Indian thinkers who deserve our Kudos—Sri Aurobindo, M.N. Roy and Mahatma Gandhi could not escape the impact of western cultural forms and intellectual institutions. The colonial past cannot just be wished away. But it is desireable to question the efficacy of the intellectual tools produced during that past where literary criticism is a means of cultural propaganda. So, this point of view gives a critical insight as S.K. Desai examines, “the history of the twentieth century Indian critical theory is nothing but a chain of fresh beginnings.”¹⁷ The documentation of Anglo-Indian writers in their tour de force is valid to the extent that, “it stems from an experience they have lived through, honestly confronted, and expressed in the language which provided the thought structure of that experience.”¹⁸

By coercively introducing an alien value structure in the existing value structures of its subjects, colonial domination causes serious dislocations and fragmentations in the intellectual discourse of the colonized. In facts, it canonizes “systems of intellectual totems and deprives the rhythm and syntax of previously existent value systems of their charm and meaning.”¹⁹ Today’s intelligentsias are, however, being sucked into globalizing process that promise material consumerist dividends at the price of dependency. Gopichand Narang warns about the post-colonial values of art and offers “other voice, the second or the inner voice of art and poetry, non-utilitarian, free of the pressures of market value and which is above political exigencies.”²⁰ Much of the recent impetus for dissent in Indian aca-

demics is derived from various post structuralist and post-modernist theories such as feminism, deconstruction, new historicism and so on. "It's not the world that is post modern, here it is the perspective from which that world is seen that is post modern."²¹ In the course of the 1970s, post modernism was gradually drawn into a post structuralist orbit. In first phase, it was primarily associated with the deconstructionist practices that took their inspiration from the post structuralism of the later Ronald Barthes and, more in particular, of Jacques Derrida. But in Indian literary perspective, Harish Trivedi underlines the unlikelihood of "Post colonial" being a real improvement over "Common Wealth" as far as we are concerned. He is still in quandary as to "which could truly be liberating or enabling, or is it like pristine colonialism itself?"²²

Trivedi's note is built upon the fact that the band wagon of post colonialism has been rigged up by the west, that is both the notion of colonial literatures and much of the theoretical discourse developed to understand interpret it is, for us an importation. As such, "post colonialism may be considered to the brain child of an imperialistic cultural system as Common Wealth studies before it was."²³ On getting Booker prize by Arundhati Roy for her "The God of Small Things", Salman Rushdie may argue that the "True Indian literature of the first post-colonial half century has been in the language the British Left Behind."²⁴ Post colonialism, then like most things of Western origin can be neither rejected nor accepted fully. We have each to work out our own adjustment and compromise with it.

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, who are considered to be the champions of this theory speak to the West, seek to modify or alter western modes of thinking and writing. Both Spivak and Bhabha may enjoy the hybridity—the mimic activity of post colonial literatures as it permits the writers to write back as both insiders and outsiders. Aijaz Ahmad in his magnum opus,

“In Theory: classes, Nations and Literatures” by rejecting the binary oppositions set between “the First and Third Worlds”²⁵ by Fredric Jameson propounds resistance to post colonial hegemonies, power imbalance and post facto extension of colonial history. Nonetheless, there is undesirable or unavoidable spin off in the world of critical theory and creative writing which might be considered as an attempt to be aufait with latest theories.

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The Poetic Genius of Rabindranath Tagore

“Essentially a poet, Tagore was much more than a poet as understood in the western sense of the term, as Gandhi was more than politician or patriot. He was a poet in the traditional Indian sense of the word, Kavi, a seer, an intermediary between the human and the divine. His genius enriched whatever it touched. Like the sun after which he was named (Rabi-ravi-sun), “he shed light and Warmth on his age, vitalized the mental and moral soil of his land, revealed unknown horizons of thought and spanned the that divides the East from the West.”¹

No doubt, man’s personality finds powerful expression in art and poetry. Poetry enables the man to fight against the mane and the inert and to transform the entire humanity. Thus, poetry leads us to higher and healthier ways than those of the world and provides the message of Nature and the mystery of God and of divine bliss. Tagore’s mind itself is a kingdom, where diverse streams crossed, flowed and merged into the land. Being a man of moods with many masks, he interprets poetry as an embodiment of truth which is coloured by emotion and passion. He finds that science has something different approach to treat the truth. So, here he is akin to wordsworth’s views:

“The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor, he cherishes and loves it in his own solitude; the poet singing a song in which all human beings join with him rejoices of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge.”²

Poetry begins where science ends. Science is incapable of revealing the mystery of existence, of evolving union with the eternal. Art and poetry “touch on ultimate truth—the truth of relationship, the truth of harmony in the universe, the fundamental principle of creation.”³ The poet’s soul wakes up by renouncing the reckless, delirious passion to the beauty and joy of the universe. The poem is not merely frenzied discovery of the nebulous self in a flood of spiritual light; it is also the discovery of that light in the beauty and joy of the world.

Though it seems to be a trouble-some task to present a panoramic account of Tagore’s entire output but critics like Nihar ranjan Roy, classifies his total gamut into six-fold pattern of growth: Germination and Early Blossoms (1872-88), Fruits of Maturity (1888-1900), Fruits of offering (1901-1913), The Nest and the Sky (1914-25), New Flowers and Fruits (1926-27) and The Sunset Glow (1937-41). It is difficult to present Tagore’s poetic account in chronological order, somehow, “Prabhat Sangit” is considered to be the poet’s modern entrance into what Keats would call the “The realm of Flora and old Pan” for, “intoxicated with the light and atmosphere”, he would see “nothing but pleasant wonders.”⁴

We come across a glittering poetic depth in “Mahasvapna” (The Dream Eternal) and “Sristi-Sthiti-Pralay” (Creation-existence-Destruction). “Mahasvapna” is pregnant with profound thought such as life, death and eternal time with vigorous

imagination. The poem moves in time, sternity and space infinity. We find a “Perpetual dance of stars and planets; the cosmic cycle of birth, death and birth again; Nature is quickened by a dynamic awesome force—all this is a vast dream of Lord Siva merged in eternal sleep.”⁵ similarly “Sristi-Sthiti-Pralay” is brimming over with Hindu myth delineating creation, existence and destruction. “Looking on” a later poem of “Pabhat Sangit” is an attempt to enjoy the sights and sounds of the stream of life. His another poem “Chabi O Gan” is a beautiful combination of subjective imagination with objective reality. Besides these, we find a collection of poems—“Akakini” (Alone), “Grame” (In the village), “Khala” (Play), “Podopadi” (The Dilapidated House)—capitalizing realistic details suffused with sentiment or transfused with the colours of the imagination.

On the contrary, we find something different note in “Artasvar” (The Frantic Scream), “Nisitha-jagat” (Night’s Universe), and “Nisitha-Cetana” (The Sentient Night). The power and passion for which the poet is well known gives us the abrupt and awesome note of Dionysian frenzy behind the Apollonian harmony. For example “Nisitha-Jagat” creates a cosmos full of pain and evil, torment and suffering—a frightfully insane world:

“Dividing darkness, for the kingdom of darkness, rages fierce struggle. Friend murders friend, father, son; what terrible madness”

Though “Manasi” steps out of adolescence into manhood but it gives us the impression of a state of uncertainty, unrest and conflict. It marks a new phase in the poetry of Tagore—a phase of “makings and breakings” “clashings and minglings” striving towards the fulfilment of its innermost meaning.

S.B. Mukherjee very aptly makes a critical inquiry and suggests:

“If ‘Kadi O Komal’ lends a glimpse of Beauty spread like a luminous mist over the imagination. Manasi blazes a track where she leaps into flame, overpowering the poet’s senses and enthralling his soul”⁶.

In the second phase of Manasi consisting of twelve poems he composes ‘Nishtur Sristi’ (The cruel creation) which is packed with Chaos of darkness, a tumult of creation and destruction guided only by a blind deterministic force:

“Across that wild trackless path of the universe, has rushed in of a sudden the flood of frenzied creation. The sun, the moon, the billions of stars, they all rush about madly.”

In this perspective Sisir Kumar Ghose rightly evaluates the poetic worth of Rabindranath Tagore:

“May be his early works are better but the later are greater. Tagore could be creative even in his negations, be these social or existential. Few poets have made such successful use of ‘failures’. Perhaps the time for a new, different and Total Tagore has come.”⁷

No doubt, the attempt of finding or searching total Tagore is a problematic task because of his range, variety and dimension. But we can trace out the stamp of his genius in every line whatever he has written. His whole literary output whether it contains positive or negative notes is packed with creativity or rejoicing freshness. Here, there is a rhythmic entirety or organic whole of light and darkness, peace and chaos, creation and destruction. In this way, just reverse to above mentioned poems Tagore’s ‘Anant

Prem" (Eternal love) epitomize a love of a rare kind, a bodiless love. Shelley's Platonic remark 'I love Love' has been fully justified.

Thus Rabindranath Tagore's ode is considered to be advancement on Keats and Kalidas. He is more a poet of Nature than of Man or God. Tagore is more a poet of separation than union. The gamut of "The crescent Moon" is large and tender and a little sophisticated. In what a beautiful way the motherless child speaks:

"I cannot remember my mother,
only sometime in the midst of play
a tune seems to hover over my playthings,
the tune of some song that she used to hum
while rocking the cradle."

As a matter of fact, no account of Tagore's poetry can be complete without a reference to "Gitanjali". Like "In Memorium", "Gitanjali" too has no any beginning, middle and end. Though both the poems sustained emotional identification. T.R. Sharma an eminent critic rightly examines the "Gitanjali" in this way:

"The poem naturally gives comfort to many troubled soul. It is a great document of intuitive faith and reads like the *Bhagwat Gita* on the one hand, and the *Psalms of the Old Testament*, on the other. It can be called a synthesis of all that is best in the Indian and the western tradition."⁸

The poet is of the opinion that God is not only omnipresent, but also the creator of everything and he dwells in

the temple of human body. God is Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram. Tagore has even eternized the mood and a moment. God is Truth that illumines the dark recesses of the poet's mind."⁹ The poet feels that the true worship of God consists in total identification with ordinary, suffering men, irrespective of self and power. Tagore's consciousness reminds the purgation and conversion of King Lear. So, the poet identifies himself with the suffering humanity in order to feel the presence of God. He remarks:

"He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where
The path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them
In sun and shower, and his garment is covered with
dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come
down on the dusty soil :"

After "Gitanjali", "The Gardener" is considered to be the richest of the collections that have appeared in English. It is also a love poem containing a divine slant. So, it has "paradisal in its purity and intensity and even sensuality."¹⁰ It is, however, suggested that Tagore's English translations or transcreations do not have the musical beauty and evocative power of the original. C. Paul verghese rightly evaluates the poetic genius of Tagore in his critical frame-work:

"Tagore is, indeed, one of the great lyric poets of the world. His lyrics are noted for their simplicity and directness of expression. The poet's sincerity of feeling and vividness of imagery combine with the rhythmic flow of words and give the reader or the hearer the impression that the poet's mystic yearning is harmoniously fused with deep human passion and significance."¹¹

The poet's spiritual message does not, however, suggest us

to run away from the 'fret and fever of life' and seek shelter in a hermitage, but insists on our full participation in the joys and sorrows of life. Reality consists not in facts but in the harmony of facts. To him poetry is a revelation of truth and religion. Religion stands for unity and harmony and aims to creating concord in discord. In 'creative unity' he defines reality in art and poetry lucidly and clearly:

"Poetry and the Arts cherish in them the profound faith of man in the unity of his being with all existence, the final truth of which is the truth of personality."¹²

Thus, Tagore evinces glittering similarity with words worth who said: "Poetry is the overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin in emotions recollected in tranquility" and Shelley who remarked: "A great poem is a fountain forever overflowing with water of wisdom and delight". The chief object of poetry is the expression of personality and not of that, which is abstract and analytical. Tagore is also of the opinion that rhythm is an alpha and omega of poetry and without which it will lose its appeal and effectiveness. Sri Aurobindo calls it Mantra—the Real and the mantric quality of poetry. Tagore finds the mystical consciousness through the transfigured sense of taste, sound, touch and sight and celebrates the knowledge. Tagore almost like Shakespeare and Blake asserts: "I will never shut the doors of my senses" as they are the sources of the "consciousness of divine reality". The poet has the esoteric feeling of mystical presence around him that makes him uneasy:

"I know not what this is that stirs in me,—I know/not its meaning."

The poetry of the last phase gives us an enlightened vision, which could be best defined by Keats 'celebrated phrase

“Negative capability.”¹³ The poetry of the last phase epitomizes Shakespeare’s utterance in “King Lear” that Keats loved so dearly—“Ripeness is all.”

Tagore’s poetry in its integrity is a vast philosophical poem—a poem of ‘felt thoughts’ communing with eternal realities “emotionally intensified and made accessible to sensibility.” Like Dante and Shakespeare Rabindranath Tagore has created his own spiritual odyssey. A critic has rightly pointed out that in “Divina Commedia” Dante was uttering in grim earnest the truth that was in him—“the poetry with a gospel and a vision.”¹⁴ In the later poems of Tagore we discover a similar kind of poetry-poetry with a gospel and vision. Benjonson’s tribute to Shakespeare is very much apposite and befitting in case of Rabindranath Tagore. His work is “so ramm’d with life that it shall gather strength of life with being.”

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The Poetic Horizon of Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo himself once said that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, only later he became a yogi. Like Rabindranath Tagore, we find the organic coherence of a poet and a seer in Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo is a prophet and seer per excellence and is better remembered for the integral philosophy which he has expounded through his magnum opus works such as *The Life Divine* and *The Human Cycle* than for his poetry. K.R.S. Iyengar remarkably evaluates the many faceted personality of Sri Aurobindo and finds *mul-tum in parvo*. He aptly expresses his views:

“To acknowledge and salute the poet and the master of the ‘other harmony’ of prose is not, of course, to deny the teacher or the fighter or the patriot, the yogi, the philosopher or the prophetic engineer of the *Life Divine*.”¹

His poetry, however, covers a vast span of time from 1890 to 1950 when he went on heavenly abode in Pondicherry. He has vast spectrum of his writing including lyrics, narrative poems, a cosmic epic and a large body of philosophical poems and a few poetic plays besides translations which illustrates the range of his poetic genius. It is considered that his earliest poems such as “Songs

to Myrtilla” and “Night by the Sea” which are bristling over with sensuous imagery, written under the spell Keats.

Sri Aurobindo’s early poetry bears the stamp of classical impact and learning which is imbued with classical myths and allusions. Sensuousness with classical tinge was the earliest style of his poetry. It can be seen and analysed through illustration.

“The vernal radiance of my lover’s lips was shut like a red
rose upon my mouth,
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves.
His love around me than the Summer air.”

Sisir Kumar Ghose argues that in the beginning of his poetic career he was writing like an Englishman. Later he switched over to Indian myths and ethos. Writing about his early sonnets, which were written on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rajnarayan Bose, S.K. Ghose writes:

“They are more English than Indo-English,
Work of Mr. Ghose rather than Sri Aurobindo.
But he soon turns homeward.”²

Though, it is not a complete break; in his later poetry we find the instances of the perfect mingling of Western and Indian mythology. References to ‘Eden’ occur times without number. In ‘Urvashi’ on the banishment of apsara from ‘Swarga’s streams and golden groves’ Indra intercedes and raises a question:

“Her wilt thou banish
From the felicity of grove and streams
Making our Eden empty of her smiles?”

We find a wonderful discourse of Narad on the problem of

pain in *Savitri* containing a description of Christ's crucifixion. Christ's crucifixion suggests the lofty message as—Pain is the hand of Nature sculpturing men/To greatness.

Sri Aurobindo was, albeit, soaked in western and Hindu myths and traditions but the poem "Urvashie" and "Love and Death" are like "Savitri" Indian in setting, sentiment and expression. In these works Aurobindo deals with the theme of 'Love Conquers Death'. We find a gradual or chronological development of the themes of the poems. If we come across the theme of love in first two poems then it is, further, enlarged in "Savitri" and attached with the divinity on earth. The tapestry of the "Savitri" is woven in such a way that it moves on a physical as well as well as a spiritual plane. On the physical plane there is the story of how Savitri wins back the soul of Satyavan from death. On the spiritual plane we find the bliss of divine or superconscious life. The pivotal point of the epic is dawn which in the Veda is Savitri, identical with Gayatri, the holiest of the Vedic mantras. Savitri herself is not merely the wife of Satyavan, but she is the incarnation of the Divine Mother. Thus Amiya Chakravarty rightly expresses his opinion about the thematic excellence of the poem of Sri Aurobindo.

He says :

"If the dominant problem in modern poetry both as subjective concern and as revealed in its manner of expression is the problem of self-consciousness, the dominant theme in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is self-transcendence."³

Sri Aurobindo like T.S. Eliot and Milton has made a successful experiment in the use of blank verse. Although Sri Auobindo is criticized for his jargonic and verbese style by the common readers

and he is classified as Johnsonian. But like words worth he is also of the opinion that the language of poetry must be related to everyday speech. If it is devoid of the living speech rhythms and current idioms it will be deprived of vitality. So, it can be stated that the language of poetry is a language distilled out of the language of common speech. No doubt, it is this 'ossification' that has overtaken the blank verse of certain poets. In relation to this C. Paul Verghese very rightly comments upon the style and technique of Sri Aurobindo:

“A study of Aurobindo’s narrative poems makes it clear that instead of trying to explore the musical possibilities of blank verse vis-a-vis the changes that have come over the speech rhythms since the seventeenth century, he allowed himself to be influenced by Milton’s poetic techniques. In the manner of Milton, Aurobindo uses epic similes, high sounding proper nouns at a stretch and also involved constructions and inversions.”⁴

Sri Aurobindo attempted to naturalize some of the classical metres in English. He also desired to achieve something tantamount to the vedic mantra; for according to him the vedic mantra is the natural medium of mystic poetry. “Ahana” the longest and one of the celebrated poems, gives us the message of divinity or eternity. In “Horis Aeternum” is also an embodiment of mystic union and divine consciousness. Similarly, “The Bird of Fire” expresses the idea of divine consciousness. Poetry achieves greatness when it effectively combines the highest intensity of rhythmical movement, with the highest intensity of verbal form and thought substance and the highest intensity of the soul’s vision of truth. Poetry endowed with these three intensities voices a

supreme harmony of five eternal powers : Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit, the five 'Suns of Poetry'.

Thus, it becomes apparent that his poetry is the poetry of yoga. Sisir Kumar Ghose an eminent critic observes the unity and growth of the poetic sensibility of Sri Aurobindo in this way :

“Sri Aurobindo is always a call to spiritual adventure and it is primarily in this light that his poems should be viewed. But the poems qua poems should not be neglected. He has written poems, not yoga illustrated in verse.”⁵

Poetry is not the thing said but the way of saying it. He is being interpreted as a kind of mystic. But the thought stirring content of Sri Aurobindo's poems deserves to be studied. He is judged as overwhelming having mysticism universal in appeal as it is genuine. Sri Aurobindo himself is very critical when he examines the poetic work of art:

“The work of the poet depends not only on himself and his age, but on the mentality of the nation to which he belongs and the spiritual intellectual, aesthetic tradition and environment which it creates for him.”⁶

Similarly M. Taine, the French literary historian says that “Literature is the creation of three factors : the race, the milieu, the moment.”⁷ In fact, this need not be accepted as a total truth, for the individual too has his own part to play in literary creation. But in sociological perspective it can be accepted or analysed. Regarding this K.D.Sethna rightly expresses his view:

“Generally the plane on which the individual mind operates is a reflection of the level at which the nation or the race lives—at least this mind's ultimate system of symbols answers to the

realities most vivid at that level.”⁸

As a poet - seer Sri Aurobindo is most distinguished because of his poetic output which has an aroma of the spirituality of India. Like Aurobindo K.S. Srinivasan rightly observes the spiritual elements of Indian literature which constitute the very soul of India. He says :

“A reassessment of the Indian heritage through Indian perception is over-due; it must include a readiness to reckon with realities as manifest in tradition. For instance, the recurring theme of karma in the literature of every language, the motivation of the four goals of life and their paths (*dharma, artha, karma and moksha*), the belief in five elements (*earth, water, fire, air, space*) and in rebirth should be seen as part of the life that shaped India.”⁹

A normal human being is bound to have the feeling of conflict and frustration, pain and suffering, sense-images and sense-pleasures. But Aurobindian stance is almost above the human planes of duality and conflict from the very outset. Primarily we find in him a metaphysical theory gradually culminating into realized knowledge, the knowledge of seeking self in the style of St. Augustus and Vivekanand. Throughout his poetic career he remains a philosophic poet, an idealistic sage, preaching his own sermon from “Essays on the Gita” as a divine don who attempts of a cosmological criticism of life. The perusal of his six poems establishes this notion that he is an omnipresent who can see present, past and future. The poet now holds Infinity in the palm of his hands and Eternity in an hour. In his critical observation Dr. K.R.S. Iyengar underlines this fact something in this way:

“His recent poems are an attempts to achieve in English something equivalent to the mantra.”¹⁰

What Dr. Iyengar says in his critical examination of Aurobindo's poetry, Aurobindo too says something but in different vein:

“Everything I wrote came from yogic experience, knowledge and inspiration. So, my greater power over poetry and perfect expression was acquired in these last days not by reading and seeing how other people wrote, but from the heightening of my consciousness and the greater inspiration that came from the heightening.”¹¹

In fact, poetry begins as Inspiration, as heightened perception generated in the artist because of his identification with some significant aspect of Reality. He disengages a theme or object from all its external associations or superficial qualities and ‘stands face to face with inmost core, its essential self’.¹² It is this identification that helps to uncover or discover Reality. ‘Beauty is Eternity gazing at itself in a mirror’ says Khalil Gibran’.¹³ What makes poetry great is the indissoluble link of the mind's response to the flux of reality. This intense and integrated response of the poet's mind can be termed as the quality of saintliness for it silences personality and has the quality of prophecy. All great poetry is inevitably saintly in character. In order to describe the nature of poetic delight he introduces a different set of Sanskrit terms : rasa, bhoga ananda. And to describe the various levels of poetic inspiration he uses the terms like Satvik, Tamsik and Rajsik. On the basis of a letter written by Sri Aurobindo to his Anglicized brother, Man Mohan Ghose, G.N. Devy an eminent modern critic evaluates him as poet critic:

“Sri Aurobindo attempts a passionate defence of Indian art and art values..... He was clearly reacting to the Indological conception of Indian literature. His need to ‘Indianize’ himself and to decolonize his critical idiom are fully evident in his early critical comments.”¹⁴

Thus, it can be summed up that through his poetic output Sri Aurobindo creates a cosmos of 'spiritual reality', 'intuitive intellect' and 'intuitive vision', which provide a body of mantric poetry or 'the mantra of the Real'. This all 'came as a proper culmination of his long, sustained and inspiring career as a poet in the English language'.

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Kamala Das's Poems : A Quest for Identity

Kamala Das appeared at a time when English poetry by Indian women had moved on from colonial and nationalist themes to personal experiences. Kamala Das's poetic output covers a wide panorama of themes, more realized settings and deeper feeling, intensity of emotion and speech, rich and full complexity of life. In a crisscross examination, her touchy and titillating feelings of loneliness and despair seem to be larger than life philosophy and personality. In fact, after the soft and soothing strains of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, the offensive individualism of Kamala Das appears as a shock. Even in this man made social construct she voices her feminine quest openly. She is critically considered to be a subjective poet and her poems are "Products of uncontrollable emotion".¹

Kamala Das started her poetic journey through 'Summer in Calcutta' in 1965 which was followed by 'The Descendants' in 1967 and the last one 'The old playhouse and other poems' in 1973. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar critically examines her poetry and pin points that, "Love is crucified in sex, and sex defiles itself again and again".² With the passage of time, her versification and sense of form became freer and looser, her style changed but did not necessarily improve. Always a hit-or-miss poet who wrote

regularly but trusted the muse more than revision, she began to miss more often. Her early poems seem to be an autobiographical odyssey of her self dealing with marriage, love life, desire for intimacy, her guilt and fame. Her poems analytically discuss the eternal and universal themes and protect the new idiomatic devices. Stylistically she develops to communicate the themes in the linguistic discourse of the woman to liberate herself from the shackles of films romance and slavery to man.

‘Summer in Calcutta’ candidly presents a sensuous absorption of sunlight which is considered to be a metaphor for the poet’s attraction and fascination. The beautiful images derived from the world of nature and images visualizing the poet’s participation in the heady ecstasy and excitement of life. It fascinatingly characterizes the poet’s sensuous, emotional and aesthetic responses to the vibrant spectrum of life at large. The poet’s warmth response to life echoes not merely sensuousness but also emotive intensity:

“What noble
Venom now flows through
My veins and fills my
Mind with unhurried
Laughter?”

Das’s life philosophy reminds Rabindra Nath Tagore’s view point, “how have the rays of the sun penetrated into my soul this dawn?”³ At the climax of her ecstatic involvement in the warm flow of life, all worries and agonies are relegated to limbo. Das’s passionate demand for love becomes the nucleus of her poems epitomizing the need to assert, to conquer and to dominate. Bruce King rightly evaluates the creative impulse of Kamala Das and says:

“In her poetry love and hate are often neighbours, just as an

assertion of sexual freedom sits near feelings of self-disgust expressed through depression. The theatre of Das's poetry includes the revelations, the confessions, the various contradictory bits and pieces".⁴

In the feministic perspective, it seems that she feels pride of her conquests and ability to make men love her. She is being driven for all—encompassing love in the game of sexual triumph with its trophies. In the psycho-analytical framework, her poems seem to be an attempt at drawing the thin line that demarcates fulfilment and unfulfilment in love.

"The Dance of the Eunuchs" is a poem "that successfully delineates the contrast between the superficial joy and the inner depravity. The eunuchs become the objective correlative of suppressed desires."⁵ Their dance appears to be happiness incarnate.

"...Wide skirts going round and round cymbals Richly clashing and anklets Jingling, Jingling, Jingling..."

The masculinity can be rejected and nullified by the woman when she is happily ready to participate in the mirth and merriment of life. Kamala Das discovers this kind of truth in the naturalist fervour and utters:

"How Brief the term of my
Devotion, how brief
Your reign when I with
Glass in hand, drink, drink
And drink again this
Juice of April suns."

Kamala Das's coup de grace is delivered by "Introduction" which articulates her quest and vision of truth. She exploits words boldly, "speaking in a manner in which people have not spoken before."⁶

Das' mode of treatment proves to be dramatic, powerful and iconoclastic:

"I was child, and later they told me. I grew, for I became tall, my limbs swelled and one or two places spouted hair. When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask for, he drew a youth of sixteen into the Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me. But my sad woman—body felt so beaten. The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me. I shrank, pitfully."

In fact, it is both psychological exploration of the self and a social assertion of one's individuality in straight forward terms. The poem begins with conversational note and ends with nervous urgency. The poet scrutinizes the linguistic differences of English used in everyday life. "The Dance of the Eunuchs" voices her authentic feelings of agony, albeit in an oblique manner.

"Some beat their drums; others beat their sorry breasts
And wailed, and writhed in vacant ecstasy."

Her personal life is solvely responsible for her head long plunge into the uncharted sea of sexuality. She finds that adultery is very common sight in city life. Her husband does not create any hurdle regarding free-love-sex life. Das boldly and honestly utters in "The Stone Age":

"Fond husband, ancient settler in the mind,
Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment,
Be kind. You turn me into a bird of stone, a
granite Dove..."

These lines are bristling over with pathos which evoke the image of sensitive feminine soul for freedom and redemption. The high pitch of her tone may appear hysterical but rather it is revelatory. This, however, reminds us of what Juliet Mitchell says in connection with the discourse of hysteria:

“Hysteria is the woman’s simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the organization of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism. It is simultaneously what a woman can do both to be feminine and to refuse femininity, within patriarchal discourse.”⁷

The cohesion between the particular and the general, the local and the universal detects in her the character of the whole humanity, and her humanity is replicated in other women.

“I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the Betrayed. I have no joys
which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.”

“The Looking Glass” presents the picture of objectivity for projecting the man-woman relationship.

“Stand nude before the glass with him
So that he sees himself the stronger one
And believes it so, and you so much more
Softer, younger, Lovelier... Admit your admiration.”

Nudity is not represented in the crude form but in the artistic galaxy to reveal the truth in poetic discourse. To man, a woman may gift the carnal wealth of her body.

“Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers.”

Das's descriptive statements are primarily concerned to elucidate the structure of her text. Conversation is a very convenient kind of English. Her *Volte Face* achieves a new kind of dimension, a new vitality, a fresh look and strength as she uses body imagery to lay bare the stark reality of life. In her thoughtful synthesis what Helen Cixous suggested Kamala Das has performed through the vibrant and volatile experience of her life. Cixous rightly argues:

“Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve discourse.”⁸

In the light of feminist critical theory it can be argued that Das has provided Indian English poetry, a new discourse, The discourse of woman's body language from the point of view of woman. The poet has rummaged through her body to flush out startling images and metaphors in order to body forth her quest for truth, the Revelation and the Apocalypse. How beautifully, she expresses her feelings:

For a while I too was earth,
In me the seed was silent, waiting as
A baby does, for the womb's quiet
Expulsion.

In the thematic analysis of the text it has been found that love and sex are the 'leitmotiv' of her poetic output and even her

frustrations have got permanent sting in her soul and this way “that does invest her identity with a certain tincture of pathos.”⁹ Sexual passion in her scheme of love—fulfilment is impregnated with poiling emotionalism. The poet is honest and humble enough to acknowledge her own share in the failure of love, yet she seems to attach the blame to her husband.

Like Shelley, who spent his life in the quest of ideal love and ideal beauty, overturing the citadel of convention, Kamala Das keeps herself busy in search of alternate moods of hope and despair, of glow and gloom in her odyssey for authentic, lustless love. Her disenchantment with married love or extra-marital love finds fuller utterance when she says:

“Love
I no longer need,
With tenderness I am most content,
I have learnt that friendship
Cannot endure
That blood ties do not satisfy.”

(The old Playhouse)

Kamala Das “realms of Gold” are brimming over with sexual love and passion within the orbit where she explores her personality. Wilson Knight critically examines that the wisdom of a poem should not be the wisdom of the poet who creates it. In case of Kamala Das it is difficult to disentangle Kamala, the poet from Kamala, the woman, who suffered and wrote. Nevertheless, “writing is a means of creating a place in the world, the use of the personal voice and self-revelation are means of self-assertion.”¹⁰

Kamala Das' Sine qua non, however, is her vocabulary, choice of verbs and some syntactical constructions are part of what has been termed the Indianization of English. This accomplishment

is suggestive in the growth and maturity of national literature that the writers free themselves from the linguistic standards of their colonizers and create a literature based on local speech.

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The Poetic Cosmos of A.K. Ramanujan

A.K. Ramanujan marks the brilliant culmination of modern Indian English poetry. He has the cosy craftsmanship to handle English with a subtlety, a flexibility and a polish which makes him at once equal to great English poets. He came into literary forefront owing to his two volumes of poetry—*The Striders* (1964) and *Relations* (1976)—he made a landmark, achieving a synthesis of two cultures—ancient and modern, each illuminating and enriching the other. Ramanujan excelled himself as a literary figure in Kannada literature with his anthology of Kannada poems—*Hokkulalli Hoovilla*. Each and every piece of his creative writing in Kannada heralded a new era in vernacular literature. A close textual scrutiny suggests that Ramanujan's poetry consists of nostalgic memories of south Indian life and, to some extent, it is limited by a failure to express a fuller or a more comprehensive vision of Indian society.

Ramanujan's 'A River' points out the implicit reality, the reality of the river and dimensions of relations between the present and the past. In Madurai during bygone days the poets are appreciative of the city, its temples, and of the river and stream. While in every summer, 'the river' dries to trickle' the 'poets sang only of the floods'. If there are floods, they are, in fact, destructive symbolizing

deaths and damaging property. There is none to write 'of the pregnant woman/drowned, with perhaps twins in her'. The image of 'pregnant woman' is wonderful, for it involves two generations, the present and the future. The ultimate stanza of the poem concludes the earlier stanza and the poet ironically says how:

The river has water enough to be poetic about only once a year.

K. Sumana rightly analyses the indepth poetic sensibility of the creator in a beautiful manner. The critic focuses the facts :

"The poet narrates the poem through the mouth of a visitor to make it objective. The greatness of the poem lies in the fact that the traditional praise for river has been contrasted with what is actually experienced by the people during the floods. Apart from presenting the grim realities of a river in spate, Ramanujan hints at the sterility of new Tamil poets who "still quoted the old poets".¹

'A River' throws the light on the attitude which is, really, more witty, intricate, distanced edition of the lampoon found in 'Epitaph on a Street Dog' having same insistence on sordid reality. 'She spawned in a hurry a score of pups,/ all bald, blind, and growing old at her paps.' There is a visionary picture of romantic India through illustrations to 'the low melon moons' and 'Peacocks' that make a contrasting reality. Ramanujan's moods and manners captivate the critical faculty of the people because of his poetic depth and insight. Bruce King critically explores this fact:

"Ramanujan is widely read in India, Western and Western— influenced modern Indian poetry in Indian languages. This unpredictable fusion of varied roots in Ramanujan's poetry is true of the attitudes it expresses."²

The panoramic vision of India in 'A River', small town, south India and 'Epitaph on a Street Dog' might be contrasted to 'Love poem for a Wife' with its memories of shared family relationships and a common heritage:

Really what keeps us apart
at the end of years is unshared
childhood
or we should do as well-meaning
Hindus did.

This is one of Ramanujan's poems in connection with the marriage problem which should not be focused as ordinary nostalgia for the closeness of Hindu family relations. The concluding part of the poem gives us humorous exaggeration.

...Probably
only the Egyptians had it right :
their kings had sisters for queens
to continue the incests
of childhood into marriage.

The 'namelessness of childhoods' suggests a time before the amelioration of individual identity and ego; while it refers to a time of unity without the strife that arises from separate wills, it can hardly be considered an answer to the problems of marriage. It is rather quoted here tongue-in-cheek as an unrealizable ideal.

Ramanujan is chiefly concerned with memory and the way it finalises or falsifies human contacts in a varying world. Ramanujan cannot be termed as conventionalist or an advocate of modernization and westernization. He is a brainchild of both and his poetic outputs mirror a personality aware of change, celebrating its verve, vigour and variety. In the poetic cosmos of Ramanujan memories are seldom as pleasant as the shared past of family

relations in 'Love Poem for a wife'. 'Breaded Fish' reminds memories of a half-naked woman dead on a beach. While the memory is not explicated, it appears to be a symbolic relationship between the affectionate gesture of a woman specially preparing the fish for him and the dead woman 'breaded/by the grained indifference of sand'. The companionship of demise and an indifferent cosmos is brought to mind by the dead fish. 'Love Poem for a wife' is an exposing critique on how an unshared childhood separates a devoted couple and 'Still life' is an embodiment of love as an abiding presence. These romantic poems are glittering for their grandiose and in fact, deep emotion, fineness of perception and the treatment of the subject matter are unique.

'Snakes' deals with the snakes of his south Indian childhood. They not only made him perplexed but are associated with family. They are 'like some terrible aunt'. As his sister braids her hair he imagines snakes. Fear haunts him until he actually steps on and kills a snake.

Now
 Frogs can hop upon this sausage rope,
 flies in the sun will mob the look in his eyes,
 and I can walk through the woods.

The poetic feeling of this poem can be expressed in the words of Bruce King :

"The poem presents an image, a complex of feelings, distilled memories and events which are not elaborated or commented upon. But as it begins in the present 'now' of museums of book stacks which contrast with rural India and family life, the poem celebrates the liberation from the fears of the past, 'ghosts' from which Ramanujan now feels safe."³

In 'Still Another For Mother' the poet seems to be an observer of a scene in London between an aged man and woman. Although he does not know exactly what took place between them:

Some thing opened
in the past and I heard something shut
in the future, quietly,
Like the heavy door.
Of my mother's black-pillared, nineteenth century
silent house, given on her marriage day
to my father, for a dowry.

The form of the clash or conflict between the man and woman crystallized on his family's past and perhaps on his own future. The 'heavy door' of the 'black-pillared', 'silent house' adds to the sense of marriage as a shutting in of deadly private quarrels. In his academic discourse with Rama Jha the poet says that his writing gets its 'nourishment' from his Indian culture, which are the backbone of his creativity. The poet rightly expresses his philosophical views :

"You cannot entirely live in the past, neither can you entirely in the present, because we are not like that. We are both these things. The past never passes-Either the individual past or historical past or cultural past. It is with us, it is what gives us the richness of—what you call it—the richness of understanding. And the richness of expression."⁴

No doubt, an expatriate enjoys two different lives—the one within, the one without. Because of the present mobility conventional notions of exile have taken on a new turn. Ramanujan too is not different from other Indians living abroad:

“I did not mean by regionalism, provincialism, nor did I mean by it just the devotion to a particular region. What I was saying was the particularity of the experience. Even when you are cosmopolitan, you ultimately have to know something quite deeply.”⁵

In the poetic universe of Ramanujan the metaphoric use of experience, inner world of memories and the continuities and the discontinuities with the past constitute the crust of his philosophy. Their efforts are not meant for philosophizing and moralizing the things like Ezekiel’s early work, they too do not have Daruwalla’s keen insight of virulent world in which fulfilment is destined to tragic failure, they too do not have Mahapatra’s metaphysical meditations on the relationship between the world of creativity and the world of realizing the self.

“Raja Rao and Ramanujan, for instance, connect the past they carry with them with the present as it exists now, and their work grows out of this tension.”⁶ The core of the essential self remains as an intuitive world, but this is amended by changed circumstances and decisions. The essential self develops, evolves, changes, it grows from seeds in the past towards a future which while unknowable is already being formed.

Theoretically the gamut of criticism which has developed around Ramanujan’s poetry has been slightly misleading in emphasising either a revivalist search for roots, some ossification of the past, or in positing a contrasting modern existentialist outsider. A cohesive or comprehensive cosmos is moving, changing, growing consistently which is akin to the vision of Ramanujan’s poetry. ‘Looking for a cousin on a swing’ evinces how the ‘innocent’ physical context of childhood becomes adult sexuality, sexual consciousness and hypocrisy:

Now She looks for the Swing
In cities with fifteen suburbs
and tries to be innocent
about it.
Not only on the crotch of a tree
that looked as if it would burst
under every leaf
into a brood of scarlet figs.

The sexuality was there always, and was realized but its young feeling could not have been known. The poem, however, is not just a psychological insight into evolving sexuality; it is like 'Love Song to a wife'. Ramanujan's 'Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House' might be discovered as symbolic of the mind in which all new experience and information becomes part of the past and is changed, just as the past is changed, by experience of the modern world:

Sometimes I think that nothing
that ever comes into this house
goes out. Things come in every day
to lose themselves among other things
lost long ago among
other things lost long ago,

Ramanujan's approach may be nostalgic of a great tradition, but the comic absurdities from beginning to the end of the poem and the ironic distancing at its summing up embody the complacency of such a relaxed view of tradition and continuity which ignores the embarrassing actualities of experience.

The inner weather transmits fears, desires, memories, the fear of snakes, sexual desire, the desire for unreflecting identity

and harmony and, as several poems record anxiety. The Striders, may be taken into account as a dynamo of Ramanujan's style, light, tight, distanced, but enclosed in its own world so that the poem seems self-contained, without wider resonances. 'The Striders' becomes a grand use of the identity of prophets. 'The Striders' is splendidly concentrated poem closely held together by sound patterns, lightly rhymed line endings and the apposite use of the co-related words at the beginning of lines to constitute a rhetorical structure. Ramanujan's each and every poem has its own dream and design.

In his poetic outburst Ramanujan adds an intimate experience and a personal crisis through the narrative mode. In the poem, 'Still Another view of Grace' the poet encounters a prostitute in the street and even after having a Brahmanical nurturing his defences fail and he comes in the trap of temptation. By subtle and soothing interaction of the abstract and concrete nouns, Ramanujan suggests the common human predicament through the simple description of the particular experience. The woman who appears here is a prostitute who loiters beyond the constable's beat and she is also a thought, a thought which flashes in one's mind. An enchanting glance from her shakes his determination and his anger cools down as her hair tumbles into his hand.

In the syntactical structure of his poems each word is used carefully, precisely, economically, spacing and line break are important. The poem itself culminates into stability, and the fixed point goes against the self, its anxieties, other persons, Indian or the past. In her stylistic analysis C.L.L. Jayaprada rightly argues:

"On the basis of the stylistic analysis of Ramanujan's poem, one can say with confidence that he is a remarkable and original craftsman. His predominantly nominal style, with the

use of concrete nouns wherever possible, renders a visual quality and terseness' to his poetry."⁷

The poet is careful in using verbs with precision and economy, the structures of which vary subtly to suit the multiplicity of themes. The syntactic structures of his poems demonstrate wonderful variety and his stanza scheme an intricacy. R.Parthasarathy rightly suggests:

"Ramanujan on the other hand has been able to forge an oblique, elliptical style all his own. ... There is something clinical about Ramanujan's use of the language. It has a cold, glass-like quality. It is an attempt to turn languages into an artifact."⁸

In a criss-cross examination it can be expressed that his technical accomplishment is indisputable and his thematic strategy is exactly the right one for a poet in his situation. Ramanujan has fully exploited the opportunities his material offers him. His analysis of the Hindu ethos has so far produced poetry of the periphery and not the centre of the Hindu experience. M.K. Naik in his critical framework examines the stylistic feat of Ramanujan:

"In poetic technique, of all his contemporaries, Ramanujan appears to have the surest touch, for he never lapses into romantic cliché. His unfailing sense of rhythm gives a fitting answer to those who hold that complete inwardness with language is possible only to a poet writing in his mother tongue. Though he writes in open forms, his verse is extremely, tightly constructed."⁹

It was a poetic tool and technique Ramanujan had received from his indepth study of older Kannada and Tamil verse and the modern Kannada poets who synthesized eastern and European models into new forms. He made it clear that Indian poets could

both be modern, sophisticated and accomplish their task from within their own literary traditions and heritage. The fragmented and fractured heritage, Indian and western of Indian poets had not before been tackled so subtly and without self-consciousness.

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The Poetic Paradigm of Nissim Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel shot into literary limelight on account of his craftsmanship, critical sensibility, a sense of discipline and devotion and mastery to Indian English poetry. He was considered to be the first Indian English poet to acquire such a dignified professional proficiency. The poet made an effort to nurture a new kind of poetic mannerism free from the precincts of provincialism and colonialism. During 1960s while the English poetry was on the edifice to break a fresh ground from formality to openness, Ezekiel pioneered the parallel platform. He excelled the modern poetry with modernistic attitudes and rejected the old fashioned facets of poetic text and context.

Thematically, city life, sexuality, problems of marriage, the need to overcome alienation etc. weave the integrity and centrality of Ezekiel's poetic cosmos. In fact his poetry is endowed with irony, critical self-consciousness, strong intellectual purpose, a multiplicity of tones and timbres, the artistic distancing of emotion and expression. There is, however, a new personality expressed and explained in the voice, themes, theory and technique. Life is visualized and realized as a quest for wholeness, for intellectual and spiritual saturation. Though the leitmotif is enlightenment of the spirit from distractions and obsessions, it is deeply grounded in

the physical and social. The poetic quest fundamentally concerns how to live happily, harmoniously, ethically as an integrated human being. Michael Garman rightly assesses Ezekiel's creative personage:

“He brings to the established traditions of love, religion and the passing hour a modern attitude of the need for a commitment, an existential plunge into life, and of cold-analytic disgust, becoming more detached and ironical as he develops.”¹

To Ezekiel poetic composition is the supreme sort of synthesis. In the poetic universe of Ezekiel, departure, journey, sea-voyage or venture are the key metaphors. His all the poems bear the sign and syndrome of the struggle in the 'primeval jungle' and in an equilibrium of opposing forces. With him the dawn of the post-colonial era begins which mirrors the image and identifies that an increasing number of educated Indian knew. 'A Time to Change' considerably shifts abruptly, angularly among its multiplicity of themes and kinds of experience which is characterised by reason and resolution, clarity and brevity. The sole or subject of the poetic creativity is construed as a moral and intellectual act which is organized in the realm of socio-cultural framework. To him art is the outcome of secular, moral conscience, its hopes and desires. The poet says:

For hours and days
 The singing voice
 To utter praise
 A bit of land
 A woman too
 Grapes or figs
 And metaphors
 Insight illumination
 Secret faults concealed no more.

His poetic works suggest the conduct, character and behaviour. 'On an African Mask' deals with the 'passion of mind or heart/Acquire the equilibrium of art'. In fact, the equilibrium between body and soul, heart and mind becomes the expected state in contrast to 'The Double Horror' a poem which begins 'I am corrupted by the world' and sums up 'infected I corrupt the world'. His work of art 'Poetry' contrasts a 'poem' which is 'an episode' with 'poetry' that is something more. 'Something to Pursue' suggests that 'There is a way' which may be followed 'Through works or poetry' or 'From works to Poetry' or 'From poetry to something else'. The motif is 'a limpid style of life/whose texture is poetry'. The poet does not care and carve for stasis but rather renewal and rejoice, an acceptance of change to be 'young again' while achieving a wholeness or unity of personality.

Redemption and rebirth of the spirit is the pivotal point of 'A Time to Change'. The search for divine wholeness manifests love, religion, poetry and style of life. 'To a certain Lady' suggests that while 'Change is permanent' and perfect 'the dancing moments of a kiss/Are real too'. Life demands 'contact with the unknown and the strange/A feeling for the mystery'. Love sharpens 'our responses to the colours of creation'. His work of art deals with the ethical intelligence trying to get coherence between various demands and desires. His poems describe how to have saintliness and morality in the secular cosmos. Nissim Ezekiel exposes an intricate modern/post modern mind seeking to integrate and substantiate experience through apposite style where imagery and allusion function like thought. The poet does not explore a modernist poetry in the flux of time and polity. In the 1950s the modernist tradition was at a low pace and several poets were reasserting the values of the well-made conversational poem. In Ezekiel's world of creativity personal turns into impersonal and intellectual command is reflected in the regularity

of rhyme and meter. 'The Third' is structurally more unified and organized than the earlier books. In 'division' he peeps back on his marriage:

With cold, determined intellect
I watched the heart to play,
And heard it sing of blessedness
Upon a nuptial day,
I warned it of a changing time
It would not sing that way.

The tensions and traumas of marriage weave the thematic corridor of the poem. The poet rejects any dictum and doctrine that tells him to withdraw from the world. Working in the classic love—tradition, Ezekiel's emphasis on the failure of sex has wider implication. There is a lack of communication in 'An Affair'.

"...She said: I love you, just like this
As I had seen the yellow blondes declare
Upon the screen, and even stroked my hair,
But hates me now because I did not kiss."

The important aspect for the speculation is that sex-failure, incoherence and the breakdown of married love continue to figure in the poem. 'The Unfinished Man' analyses a free and frank admission that the time for meditation has passed away. The poet finds himself again to the plunge into life, and once more the attempt is to the city.

"The marsh where things are what they seem."

(*A Morning Walk*)

On the plane of consciousness and conscientiousness the poet is aware of the fact that nothing will change, 'his will is like the

morning dew', he belongs to the city, 'an active fool'. The redeeming scopes of love and longing are noticed by 'commitment' in which the dangers of passion are superior to the last men.

"Who wanted only quiet lives and failed to count the growing cost of cushy jobs or unloved wives."

'Event' significantly makes it palpable that what is actually felt and what should be felt. The woman, naked, native talks of triviality and proposes sex when the speaker, aware of the mood and manner of time has become a drift. 'Marriage' his another poem sarcastically evinces the maturity from the ecstasy of the loving complacency of lovers who think they will never be separated to their fall from grace.

However many times we came
Apart, we came together. The same
Thing over and over again.
Then suddenly the mark of coin.

Apart from a sense of intimacy and integrity, the sexual act has culminated in dreariness and loneliness. The penultimate poem 'The Unfinished Man' is supposed to be a subject of examination. After having a realization of wasting time on politics and 'useless knowledge' and again taking marriage as a hell, the speaker comes to know the requirement for firm action. 'The Unfinished Man' is readable owing to its self-scrutinizing psychology and refined craft. Bruce King rightly analyses the theme and situation in his critical framework:

"The volume moves from generalization towards the personal, from complaint to decision and ideal. Variety is created by various juxtapositions; there are recurring situations, themes and images. The general regularity of strict

traditional metre and rhyme is appropriate to the intellectual concerns and logical pressure, making the changes of stanzaic shapes and rhyme schemes appear more varied than they really are.”²

These are the poems which remarkably articulate the advantages of a formal, reflective manner. Here images constitute their metaphoric mark without attracting attention to themselves and where there is a jumble of allegories and symbols without fuss. Indubitably there is a flow and flux of wit, lucidity, depth and seriousness. Ezekiel was eager to prune the excesses of romanticism while he jots down something pertaining to self and psyche. Ezekiel and Shiv kumar are liberated from Sarojini Naidu’s romantic subjectivism even when they treat such a personal emotion as love. Both Ezekiel and Kumar are capable of carrying on “proper criticism” and inquiring of their experiences that made them to identify the presence of heterogeneous, sometimes opposed feelings and emotions. For example, in Ezekiel’s poem “Love Sonnet, the surroundings—the cafe, the hill, the birds and the city lights—get linked with the poet’s emotions which are ‘turbulent’ and ‘passionate’, only to be metamorphosed into a lightness (“flowing down the hill, as on a cloud”), finally to disintegrate into a ‘certain happiness’ which is like death”.³

(“to die”)

“This cafe, on the hill among the birds,
 Could house a passing cloud
 The city’s Lights
 Are coming on.
 You and I wait for words;
 Our love has formed like dew in summer nights
 The wind has ruffled up your hair;
 We look in consort at the distant sea,
 And feel it turbulent and salty there,”

The organization of the poem is a cafe on the hill during the sun setting. Ezekiel contributed twenty poems between 1960 and 1964. 'Philosophy' does not approve or accept the intellectualized analysis, which disrupts the reality of experience.

What cannot be explained, do not explain.
The mundane language of the senses sings
Its own interpretations. Common things
Become, by virtue of their commonness,
An argument against the nakedness
That dies of cold to find the truth it brings.

On the level of theme and subject 'Night of the Scorpion' articulates and analyses the behaviour of the peasants, his father, his mother and a holy man when his mother was poisoned by a scorpion's sting. The passionate urge for poetry is reflected by day-to-day reality as observed, known, felt, experienced rather than as the intellect thinks it should be "Ezekiel remains detached and offers an intellectual treatment of the subject. The poem gains its peculiar fervor from the poet's sense of detachment. It is a simple narrative poem in which the force of superstition and age old beliefs is pitted against the scientific temperament."⁴ There is no transparency as to which way works, but after twenty hours the sting is lost. After a day the poison is no longer felt and, in an ultimate irony, his mother expresses a typical motherly comment:

My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on me
and spared my children.

Ezekiel's implication is not, however, to explain the scepticism but rather the exact notation of what he saw as a child. The target

is not to explore but to make real by naming, by saying 'common things'. The poem is a fresh direction, a vision of common reality pertaining to Indian life uninterrupted by cold intellect. The novel purpose is pursued in the poem's style, unrhymed, with line lengths chiselled by natural syntactical units and rhythm created by the cadences of the speaking voice into a long verse paragraph. Mohan Ramanan rightly comments:

"Poems like" Poet, lover, Birdwatcher,"
 "Night of the Scorpion" or "Background
 Casually" are successful precisely because
 of Ezekiel's wise and mature choice of
 genre, and his 'less deceived', ironic and
 cool attitude. He eschews the large Romantic
 gesture and settles for his own kind of classical,
 meditative, reflective poetry."⁵

The poet's attention had changed from the quest for integration to an acceptance of the realities and the simplicity of life. The senses, sensibilities, survival and earthly awards became worthy of attention. His poems selected in 'Indian English' (1967-72) are ingredients of his commitment to 'stay where I am' which discuss ordinary life. Ezekiel's poems might be examined as an endeavour towards using local speech in serious verse. Language unlocks the speaker's mind and social context. Cliches, images, unintended puns are among the devices used to signify hypocrisy, pretence, limited opportunities and confusion.

The poem in second language situation can be analysed as part of an awareness that baffled ideas and emotions, slogans, and talk of traditions add to the perpetual poverty of the people and their exploitation. The unwillingness of 'The Patriot' and

'The Professor' to acknowledge reality, the manner they meditate in usual, comforting, slipshod ideas, slogans and phrases might be paradoxical with poet's own consciousness of native social reality. The previous effort for attaining self-integration has got failure and Ezekiel himself did not fuse into harmony. Sexual passion, love, family, politics, philosophy, poetry, the spiritual all have become independent and would not be coherent again. His poetic journey covers different phases as he move to new modus operandi and kinds of creativity like poster, post card and passion poems between 1972 and 1975. There is a consistency in the desire for perpetual youthhood, to remain young at heart, the attractions of sex. The self-satisfied, confused coziness of "The Professor" does not move towards the satisfaction and somehow something else is demanded to calm the mind, to satisfy the spirit.

In the mid 1970s his poetic output symbolises the inarticulate and the ordinary for their mystery, not their simplicities. Ezekiel's 'Hymns' are 'in darkness' suggesting their deconstructive relationship to the Sanskrit classics. These are not hymns epitomizing the spiritual unknowable darkness. These tough are and terse, epigrammatic songs of the modern spirit unable to express any ultimate reality beyond the life it experiences:

All you have is the sense of reality, unfathomable as it yields
its secrets slowly one by one

'Nudes 1978' emerges as a sequence of fourteen sonnets demonstrating various facets of perception to explicate the relationship between reality and ways of seeing. The poems artistically underline the various features and distinctions between nudeness and nakedness. Nakedness, however, is the natural state while nudeness is normally exhibited in cultural items like art and

painting. 'Nudes 1978' focuses the attachment of the nude to the naked is analogous to poetry's commitment to realism. From beginning to the end, parallels are recommended between human sexual desire and the reality of its object. Psychologically these poems discover the nature of reality. The fundamental of the man and woman relationship is to get the other's body as a source of pleasure and sensuality. Here body appears to be a form where even without sexual act or sexuality human body is celebrated as a 'cosmos of the soul'. Metaphorically 'Nudes' provides the touch and tune of 'hymns' in the philosophical interpretation of the psychological realism.

'Yes, this is me as I am',
naked seen, seeing nakedness,
named, flawed in detail,
womanly and vulnerable.

Intellectually or spiritually Ezekiel does not locate the terra incognita but he is quite unable to get himself free from emotional pitch and plethora. In several respects like themes, form, manner and craft Ezekiel is considered to be an ideal and model poet. In the poetic tradition of Ezekiel, poems become more argumentative, conversational and the scene seems to be symbolical. In his syntactical structure speech, diction, imaginary are compressed and co-ordinated and the tone remains firm and ironic. As a poet Ezekiel is celebrated for his intellectuality, morality and commitment with the modernity where poetry becomes a song of experience and innocence. The summum bonum of his poetic paradigm is that there are plenty of truths which are experienced and experimented in their complexities and contradictions, delights and disillusionments without preconceived and preoccupied ideas of what poetry should suggest to the life and literature. He has imitated the script which is popular only in England and America and provided new life and lease to it.

Nissim Ezekiel has fused his native voice with the English verve and vitality in an unavoidable linguistic situation.

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The Critical Kaleidoscope of Sri Aurobindo

“Criticism of criticism is an inherently tricky affair.... In proportion to the growth of interests that has occurred in recent years in the theory of literature, criticizing the critic is increasingly the thing in some quarters, it seems almost to have taken over from criticizing literature altogether.”¹

Sri Aurobindo was born and brought up in an intellectually charged English atmosphere, quasi-ignorant of his mother tongue, and surrounded by servants who spoke either broken English or Hindustani. At the age of eleven years he had ‘a premonition that great revolutions were going to take place’² in time to come and he had a part to play in. Even in minor age, he paid his attention to the world classics i.e., English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, medieval and modern Europe while ‘the entire history of Europe was not only extensive, but extraordinarily deep.’³ Thus the Times Literary Supplement began by saying “of all modern Indian writers Aurobindo—successively poet, critic, scholar, thinker, nationalist, humanist—is the most significant and perhaps the most interesting.”⁴

In all the disciplines of knowledge, criticism is indubitably the

presiding factor. All the Literary output essentially needs 'a faithfully unfaithful reflection which always amounts to a transformation.'⁵ And even on theoretical plane this transformation can be realized only through critical evaluation. It can be argued that if imagination is the tour de force of the literary artist, criticism is the sine qua non of literature. In case of Sri Aurobindo, his critical output may not be systematic but is vivifying with verve and vitality almost startling.

However his two letters on Bernard Shaw and Anatole France are considered to be little gems. But the piece de resistance is no doubt, *The Future Poetry* where he develops, using the history of English poetry as text or illustration, his theory of poetry as vision or mantra. In addition to this his holistic commentary on the Veda, The Gita and the Yoga, albeit, does not lay down any critical ideology but that is the rarest among rare pieces of critical judgment. Moreover his all the lectures, speeches and articles are not obiter dicta rather they constitute the nucleus of critical theory. This is commonly assumed that 'Sri Aurobindo is primarily a philosophical author, dealing with esoteric and eschatological issues'⁶ but he is more than the deity of a coterie where there is nothing like terra incognita. In spite of having written metaphysical masterpieces he has always held that he was never, never a philosopher. Both his manner of seeing and writing come from another source and serve another purpose. He is not a pedagogue or an academic, but essentially a poet and prophet above all a critic of new social and intellectual order which came in the wake of colonialism and the Renaissance.

Quite natural to Sri Aurobindo he has recorded visions and insights rather than built intellectual systems. And this way, his all the literary output becomes a critical inquiry to perceive the display of a life of sensations, or the illusions cast by spiritual imagination. This is the sense of totality, totalitatdenken, *Samyak*

dristi what the humanistic, Greek genius knew or cared for. He empirically justifies himself as a master of experiences and subtle distinctions and the ultimate message is immediate and lasting. The beauty of his critical survey is alive in every part, each varies from the other, and yet united by a common pursuit hint at a unified sensibility and cosmic culture rare by any standard. Thus it requires to have courage to see the object as it really is. S.K. Nandi rightly evaluates the critical contribution of Sri Aurobindo in the perspective of colonialism and modernity. He suggests:

“Thus the philosophies of art and beauty as found in the two Tagores (Rabindranath and Abanidranath) and in Brajendranath Seal and Sri Aurobindo were very much allied in their fundamentals as they borrowed from the same storehouse of Indian civilization and culture. ... These Indian thinkers line up with the most, ardent logical minds of the West who ever thought and wrote on aesthetic problems in recent past.”⁷

To see Sri Aurobindo in entirety, one must not be not only sensitive but spiritual, not only spiritual but sensitive. And now down the decades, more and more eyes are rolling towards him not merely for entertainment but for enlightenment, for that source of transformation which has haunted the mind of man ever since the dawn of his civilization and conscience. G.N. Devy an eminent critic on Indian culture and colonialism makes an attempt to gauge the depth of literary values and critical reality. He remarks:

“Had the Renaissance effected a real transformation and produced an organic synthesis, the modern Indian critic could have thought in terms of a modern Indian tradition of literary criticism. The synthesis was, in reality, a hotch potch of ideas

drawn from a wide range of cultural and chronological sources. This haphazard mixture of ideas acquired value within the colonial context. It is in this sense that colonialism and the Renaissance were interrelated.”⁸

In his thoughtful essay “The Aryan Ideal and the Three Gunas” Sri Aurobindo expresses a similar view ‘Sattwa can never be the cause of downfall; indeed a nation which is predominantly Sattwic cannot remain bound in chains of slavery.’⁹ He delves into the deep of the socio-religious awakening of his life time and finds that—‘in the nineteenth century there was not the same awakening in politics and society as in religion’¹⁰ because the field was not ready. Consequently ‘there was no crop though plenty of seeds were sown.’¹¹

Though in different vein but the similar views are expressed by M. Taine, the French literary historian who finds literature as ‘the creation of three factors: the race, the milieu and the moment.’¹² When the world is objectivized as an autonomous reality in principle extraneous to the subject, then time, as a mode of the world’s presentation of itself to consciousness is correspondingly exteriorized. World and time, or world in time, appear as ‘crushing realities independent of and prior to self, to which the latter is subjected.’¹³ Sri Aurobindo belongs to the Indian Renaissance period, the historical boundaries of which have not yet been thoroughly debated or defined. He examines Indian Renaissance as cultural movement experienced by Ireland:

“The Indian Renaissance was less like the European one and more like the Celtic movement in Ireland, the attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse of self expression which shall give the spiritual force for a great reshaping and rebuilding.”¹⁴

Thus it can be argued that like Rabindranath Tagore and all the eminent critics Sri Aurobindo too is the outcome of Indian tradition as Matthew Arnold and F.R. Leavis are outcome of a long tradition of the usefulness of criticism in English society. In a radical reinterpretation of the English critical tradition, Terry Eagleton has shown how criticism was a tool of social protest in the eighteenth century and then how it acquired the status as a class 'possession.'¹⁵ Similarly, Sri Aurobindo believes in the evolutionary growth of knowledge and wisdom. He finds 'knowledge itself was a traveling and a reaching, or a finding and a winning, the revelation came only at the end, the light was the prize of a final victory.'¹⁶ In comparison, Sri Aurobindo was more consistent and original for he tried 'to present a systematic theory of futuristic poetry'.¹⁷

With the traditional Indian concept of the poet as a seer at the back of his mind, he asserts that poetry is a revelation of something that exists eternally. Thus, he introduces the Sanskrit terms Satvik, Tamasik and Rajasik to describe various levels of poetic inspiration. To him, 'inspiration is always a very uncertain thing, it comes when it chooses, stops suddenly before it has finished its work, refuses to descend when it is called.'¹⁸

In Sri Aurobindo's critical framework poetry is essentially a revelation passing through the consciousness of the poet in the form of inspiration, manifests itself as an individual poem. The implication is that poetry must strive towards the condition of revelation in order to be perfect. The summum bonum of his poetic output is the intuitive reason, the intuitive judgment and the intuitive intellect of the poet. These are considered to be the higher functions of the poet's mind. Thus, Revelation-Inspiration—Manifestation is a continuous process in the critical parameter of Sri Aurobindo. What makes poetry great is the indissoluble link of the mind's response of the flux of reality. This intense and integrated response of the poet's mind can be termed as the

quality of saintliness, for it silences personality and has the quality of prophecy. All great poetry is inevitably saintly in character. Thus in judging the literature in the realm of his own critical principle, he brought four criteria—‘imaginative originality, expressive power, creative genius, scope of subject-matter, the last criterion implying also scale of work.’¹⁹

By applying his own critical theory Sri Aurobindo classifies eleven poets ‘for the utter first class but into three rows.’²⁰ In the top row he considers no more than four on an equal basis of essential excellence: Valmiki, Vyasa, Homer and Shakespeare.

In the second row there comes Dante, Kalidasa, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil and Milton and finally in the third row stands in solitary grandeur Goethe. To Sri Aurobindo, Goethe goes much deeper than Shakespeare. Shakespeare was a supreme poet and Goethe was by far the greater man and the greater brain. Regarding the greatness of Homer and Shakespeare, Sri Aurobindo gives a beautiful critical explanation. “I was thinking of their essential force and beauty—not of the scope of their work as a whole.”²¹ To him, the supreme poetry is man’s soul finding tongue for any aspect of its world-experience in a pattern of language where profundity acquires a perfect resonance.

In one of his essays written in 1907 Sri Aurobindo introduces a different set of Sanskrit terms: *rasa*, *bhoga*, *ananda* to describe the nature of poetic delight. Bharata Muni considers ‘*rasa* as the *sine qua non* of poetry; without *rasa* poetry is meaningless.’²² Thus, Sri Aurobindo’s critical endeavour seems to us a passionate defence of Indian art and art values and he is of the view that Indian literature would no longer appear a volley of grotesque and crude folktales but would seem full of a spirit of harmony and delight. His criss-cross attempt is intended to ‘Indianize’ himself and to ‘decolonize’ his critical idioms which are fully evident in his early critical comments.

In his critical assessment Sri Aurobindo finds that English poetry falls short of the ideal of the poetry as 'the mantra of the Real'. The criteria that Sri Aurobindo employs to assess the achievements of English poetry are 'revelation of spiritual reality', 'intuitive intellect', and 'intuitive vision'. He presents a comparative critical account between the English poetic tradition and the Indian poetry of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The principles laid down in *The Future Poetry* mattered much to Sri Aurobindo because he himself was fond of Indianizing the tradition of English Romantic poetry. Thus Sri Aurobindo raises a basic question:

"...it will not be miss to enquire what is the highest power we demand from poetry; or let us put it more largely and get nearer the root of the matter—what may be the nature of poetry, its essential law, and how out of that arises the possibility of its use as the mantra of the Real."²³

To Sri Aurobindo, Poetry achieves greatness when it effectively combines the highest intensity of rhythmical movement, with the highest intensity of verbal form and thought substance and the highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. Poetry endowed with these three intensities voices a supreme harmony of five eternal powers: Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit—the five 'Suns of Poetry'.

Sri Aurobindo is critically keen to show the spiritual aspect of poetry so he tends to twist Sanskrit poetic terms. Therefore, the term is pressed into use for forming his artist—oriented, expressive theory of poetry. Sri Aurobindo takes the metaphor seriously and equates 'brahmananda' with 'Kavyananda' in a literal way. Though Sri Aurobindo refutes the colonial hierarchy of cultures nevertheless the whole structure of his *Future Poetry* is designed after Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*. G.N.Devy

critically examines the objective facts of Sri Aurobindo and suggests:

“Sri Aurobindo as a colonial critic, an enterprising intellectual belonging to a demoralized, amnesiac society desperately trying to revive a culture almost gone to seed.”²⁵

By analyzing Sri Aurobindo’s critical contribution and literary achievement there finally evolves what may be called the basic and central ethos characterizing the whole of Indian literature written in different languages. As Homer is credited with the making of Greek culture, the poet of Savitri, stands as the maker of a new age of poetry in life and literature. Let us salute the Dawn, that harmonises with the dawn s that shone out before and those that now must shine.

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ISBN-81-7625-240-9

Jacket Design by J.M.S. Rawat

2001, Size-Demy, pp. 172+10



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