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Editor’s Note

In continuation of our endeavours towards the pursuit of providing a platform encompassing literary revelations, it gives me great satisfaction to showcase through the fourth edition of this journal, the rich diversity of the scholarly work being carried out at present. The literary contributions published herein are fruitful achievements that serve as shining examples of the exemplary standards we set out for during the conceptualisation of this journal.

The critiques of popular and classical works in this issue are sublimely matched with the social commentaries, underlining the passage from the metaphysical to the existential. The changing times have often made us re-examine what the glorious past had to offer, and at the same time embrace the evolving boundaries of religion, spirituality, society - and more often than not the value system at large. There is a cycle of stages that defines every journey through the course of evolution; poets, philosophers, writers across civilisations have succeeded, and struggled with attempting to bring forward the pattern connecting human lives to tangible ideas. The status quo leaves many an adages vulnerable to facing redundancy, and yet new ones continue to be added to pop culture references and those of our future generations at a surprising pace.

As an editor while it is inevitable, and desirable to an extent to have a potpourri of prolific writers contributing, it is also encouraging to observe the advent of younger researchers staking their claim on literature’s influence of perceptions and beliefs. This edition thereby brings forward an uplifting amalgamation of viewpoints that would open doors to a room with a reaffirming view. Efforts have been made to preserve the variety of freshness that our readers would have come around to expect from the journal. Though it doesn’t need a mention, feedback, suggestions and contributions would be very obliging. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who has helped to promote the readership of this journal.

Dr Jyotsna Sinha
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TREADING THE PATH OF POSTMODERN RELIGION IN PAULO COELHO’S THE ZAHIR

Dr Gurpyari Bhatnagar

Paulo Coelho captures the contours of the postmodern ethos in ‘The Zahir’ where pluralism, occultism, myth, intuition and mysticism form the centre stage of the novel. The paper analyses the postmodern spiritual stance of the characters that emanates from the climate of postmodern age of cultural anesthesia, uncertainty and instability. The paper argues that though the elements of postmodern society, culture and religion permeate the novel yet the novel is not the work of a postmodern thinker but a postmodern humanist who would not like to be stuck in a permanent boom with no paradigm for healing the self if not the world.

It is very unfortunate that influence of postmodernism has penetrated every aspect of man’s life including his system of beliefs. Fragmentation and confusion which are the characteristics of postmodernism have swept in man’s view of religion where he has started to hold the perspective that religion has lost its power and can no longer save him from his decay. Universal religions and ethical laws are substituted by personal interpretation of religion. Religion has been reduced to ‘human-made phenomenon’ where the individuals have started to create their own spiritual world. Postmodern philosophers like Richard Rorty have gone to the extent of saying that “ecclesiastical institutions” are dangerous to the health of democratic societies, and therefore “religion” which is “privatized” should be preferred. (Rorty: 33) Moving from atheism to anticlericalism, to open view of God and religion, man seems to have altogether forgotten that religion is something which is concerned with timeless spiritual knowledge, which lies beyond normal human sensory perception and therefore, is not an issue of debate and change.

The novel under study, ‘The Zahir’ is by an author who became an atheist during his youth but returned to his religion of childhood because he felt catholic religion was in his blood. During his teenage years, Paulo Coelho was disillusioned with the institution of religion which he felt was irrational, authoritarian and repressive: “The chains of rigor were so heavy throughout my youth that very quickly I started to doubt this religion that showed no mercy, only constraint and suffering. I remember being obliged to attend Mass and the constant
threats of hell in the mouth of the priests. Everything was sin, everything was forbidden, and joy was ruled out.” (paulocoelhoblog) Consequently, he became a hippie and started to explore different paths to reach God. Having found no solace in hippie culture, he became an atheist but finally returned to Catholicism. Coelho's spiritual turn came when he made a catholic pilgrimage in Spain. Coelho is now a committed Catholic but he still does not believe in a single path of realizing God: “I’m a Catholic. But I think that each and every religion, if chosen with sincerity, leads to the same God.” (Ibid) His fascination with the spiritual quest finds space in most of his works including ‘The Zahir’ where he explores freewill, religion, society and morality from a profoundly postmodern view.

The opening pages of ‘The Zahir’ lead us to the unnamed protagonist, a bestselling writer who is leading a life without depth and meaning. His way of thinking fits quite comfortably with the postmodern thought on morality and relationships: “The woman is looking for the excitement, I’m looking for adventure, and that’s that. The next day you both pretend that nothing happened and life goes on...” (Coelho: 7) His violation of ethics and codes of conduct is snubbed by the author as his personal preference on sexuality. The liberal postmodernist in Esther, the narrator’s wife, too ignores her husband’s conduct on the grounds that she doesn’t want to “possess a body and a soul” that aren’t hers. (Ibid: 37). Coelho does not attach any moral pronouncements to the actions of the narrator nor does he hold his deviant sexual behaviour responsible for the sudden disappearance of his wife from his life.

Though initially the readers find him celebrating his newly found bachelorhood, they discover a few pages later that he cannot get rid of the memories of Esther that have turned into ‘zahir’. Her memories start to grow in his soul and occupy his every thought. He soon discovers that his state of being free without his wife is just an illusion and therefore, begins his search for her. He continues the search even when he gets to learn that his wife had been seeing somebody called Mikhail. This clearly suggests that his sense of freedom allowed his wife the same freedom and space that he himself wanted in his life. While considering the possibility of his wife meeting another man as one of the reasons for her sudden disappearance, he feels that he had never ‘asked any questions and she never told me anything. We were both free, and we were proud of that.’ (Ibid: 15)
Postmodern society not only moulds the thinking of the characters as individuals but also their religious thinking as religious liberals. Before her disappearance, many a times Esther communicates her frustration over the existing belief system and dogmas to her husband, what may seem to the postmodern theorists an inevitable despair.

‘Do you think we two could save the world?’
‘I think there are more people out there who think the same way. Will you help me?’
‘Yes, as long as you tell what I have to do.’
‘*But that’s precisely what I don’t know!*’(106)

Discontented with the postmodern condition that offers no facile answers, no clearly delineated lines on which to order existence, she disappears from the narrator’s life without leaving any trail. On meeting Mikhail she realizes they share the common mission of making the ‘energy of love circulate in the world.’ (ibid: 144) In her mission of finding a place on the face of the earth where love exists, she makes a trip to Kazakhstan with him, where she learns ‘Tengri culture’. She learns the tradition of the steppes which says ‘in order to live fully, it is necessary to be in constant movement’, ‘not physically…but on a spiritual plane. Going farther and farther, distancing yourself from your personal history, from what you were forced to become’. (ibid: 203) The word ‘Tengri’ means ‘sky worship’ which is defined as a ‘kind of religion without religion’. (ibid: 323)

The followers of this religion profess the idea that one cannot take Divinity out of nature and ‘put it in a book or between four walls.’ (ibid: 323) Esther finds inspiration from Dos and his grandfather who teach her the art of emptying the mind in order to awaken the soul. She gets in touch with the tribes and local shamans with whom she shares her stories from her past life. She feels that by doing so she is able to forget her past and “open up to the love that is present everywhere.” (ibid: 337)

Like Esther, Mikhail also tries to discover his own ideology of hope. His view of religion is born of despair of a Kazakh who has seen nearly half the population of his country dying between 1932 and 1933. He is the son of a man who was sent to fight the Germans in Stalingrad at the age of seventeen. The psychological impact of 200-day-long battle is depicted through Mikhail’s father’s insomnia, frustration and the “cigarettes that he smokes whenever he can scrounge them”. (ibid: 185) Facing the death of his friend in close proximity at the warfront is not as appalling for his father as eating the
“flesh of their dead, frozen companions”. (ibid: 184) Though the war ends and his father is declared the hero of Stalingrad, yet there is no end to the battle he has to face every day. First his father falls a victim to unemployment and then caught by the communist government “who accuse him of consorting with criminals, and despite being the war hero, he spends the next ten years in Siberia labeled a traitor of the people”. (ibid: 184)

Mikhail grows up in an environment where his childhood is dictated by the “existence of a dream, an ideal” that Kazakhs must fight “for the victory of Communism and for equality amongst all human beings.” (ibid: 188) His eyes, though of a small child, could not be shut to the disparity between the rich and the poor, between the party representatives and the people of his village and he grows up rejecting such ideals. Moreover, he learns from the headmaster of his school that “religion was merely invented to fool the people” and “that only the old and superstitious …ignorant, idle people who lack the necessary energy to rebuild the socialist world” go to the place of worship. (ibid: 190) Since the age of eight, he hears ‘voices’ and sees the ‘light’ and believes that these are the symptoms of his “connection with the power.” (Ib;: 147) When he talks about his ‘visions’ openly, he is expelled from the school on the grounds of encouraging superstition.

When he turns young, he leaves for Almaty with his mother and starts to work in a garage. He leads a ‘normal’ life with his friends, discovering sex and getting involved in street fights like any other adolescent when one day Esther comes to his garage to get the tank filled. When she enquires of Mikhail if he knew of an interpreter who could go with her into the interior of Kazakhstan, he feels that “the little girl’s presence” has filled “the whole place” and “once more” he places his “trust in the voice. I plead for help from the invisible girl and ask her to enlighten me; I promise that if I get this job, I will carry out the mission entrusted to me …” (ibid: 200,201). He very strongly feels that neither his mother nor his boss made any fuss about his leaving the job and letting him go with Esther as if “the voice were manipulating the minds”. (ibid:202) On his return from the spiritual odyssey with Esther, he is advised by her to run a little group therapy in France where he could unleash the force of Absolute Love on the earth through ‘Tengri’ culture. He starts to hold meetings with the members of the ‘invisible movement’, with the “people who are afraid of ending up” like the previous generation, “a generation that dreamed it could
revolutionize the world, but ended up giving in to ‘reality’.”(ibid: 276)
He introduces not only the culture of storytelling but also of dancing and integrates the two with the consumption of alcohol and drugs. In the process of telling their own stories, people try to find the reason of their existence. The ritual of storytelling is followed by the ritual of dancing where the members of the group pay their homage to the ‘Lady’. Mikhail calls this movement the ‘new Renaissance’ which he defines as ‘a return to a magical language, to alchemy and the idea of the Mother Goddess, to people reclaiming the freedom to do what they believe in and not what the Church or the Government demand of them.’(141)

When the narrator takes the help of Mikhail in finding his wife, he is also induced with a new experience of spirituality. He discovers a new ‘language of signs’ and the mystery of the universe when he starts to trust the intuitive power of Mikhail. “…we just have to look around us with respect and attention in order to discover where God is leading us and which step we should take next… everything is interconnected and has a meaning.”(172) The narrator now discovers that the sudden disappearance of his wife from his life is the God’s scheme because this incident is instrumental in not only introducing him to Mikhail but also making him reflect on his past in order to free himself from the ‘accommodator’: “I had to lose her in order to understand that the taste of things discovered is the sweetest honey we will ever know”. (The Zahir: 333) Now he decides the destiny to unfold the events in its own way and just follow the signs so that he can free himself from the power of ‘Zahir’. On reaching steppes in Kazakhstan, the narrator is told by Dos that Esther has been learning the art of making carpet. The narrator sees the carpet as a sign to their union and compares himself and Esther to Ulysses and Penelope. Their ecstatic union in the end liberates the two rather than subordinating any of them and he feels everything has disappeared and he is now “as empty as the steppes.”(Ibid: 337).

The ending where the narrator and Esther are re-united as man and wife shows that Coelho attempts to build together ‘freedom’ and ‘security’ by re-building the idea of ‘community’ and ‘marriage’ within a postmodern setting. He tries to re-create a world beyond fragmentation by recognizing the spiritual attitude of harmoniously adjusting to an ‘unseen order’ which the postmodern thinkers have refused to believe. Moreover, what seems very interesting in the novel is the portrayal of shaken belief of Mikhail; that too towards the end of
the novel which clearly depicts that no religious institution can stand firmly that is devoid of its very foundation:

“I talk to beggars, wander the streets with the tribe, organize the meetings at the restaurant, and what I have achieved? Nothing. I’m not like Dos, who learned from his grandfather. I only have the presence to guide me and sometimes I think that perhaps it is just a hallucination; perhaps my visions are just epileptic fits and nothing more.” (Ibid: 325)

Therefore, ‘The Zahir’ not only explores the traits of postmodernism but also the consequences of undermining the foundations of truth, morality and religion. The novel has very interestingly argued that the absence of any transcendental foundation brings nothing but crisis and fragmentation.

References


The literary output of Bruno Schulz, a Polish writer of Jewish origin, who died a tragic death in 1942, can be interpreted from the postcolonial perspective referring to various critical texts dedicated to the writings of the author of The Cinnamon Shops. The term “postcolonialism”, understood as both the state of culture of the given country and the research method will be found useful in this text.

Poland converted to Christianity in 966. This decision, taken by the contemporary ruler of the country, Mieszko the First, had a political background and was intended to, among other things, restrain German emperors from conquering Poland. Those conquests were led in the name of Christianization process, and, on the other hand, to enable Polish rulers to take up this same activity towards East Slavic tribes. This relation- defensive in the Western part of the country and expansive in the East- established the pattern of geopolitical activity of Poland for centuries. The fulfillment of this pattern led to the growth of significance of Poland on the international arena; the apex of this imperial position Poland achieved in the XVI century. The XVIII century is a time of gradual decline in Polish history. Interior conflicts among the nobility and the gentry led to the political and military weakening on the European arena. The second half of the XVIII century was the time of so-called partition of Poland; finally, in 1795, the territory of Poland was divided between Austria, Prussia and Russia. The reunion of the country was a consequence of changes initiated by the World War I and dates to the years 1918-21; Poland regained its statehood in the geographical space similar, however smaller than that from the XVIII century.

A number of political, economic, sociological and cultural phenomena that took place in Polish history, contributed to mental separation from the entire territory of the country of so-called Kresy – a term close to the English “Outskirts” or “Borderlands”- eastern border. In other words, the picture of those lands forming in the awareness of the Poles throughout the centuries, should be considered in mythical categories. It is worth emphasizing that this construct is of dynamic character. A Polish literary researcher, Mieczysław Dąbrowski, points to three emanations of the myth of Kresy in the history of Poland. Starting with the XV c. the myth of antemurale christianitatis began to operate- with Poland as the
antemurale of Christianity and the protector of Europe against Islam threatening our continent from the territory of Asia. In the time of political and military failures, Kresy were seen as the place of sepulchres of national heroes and of bloodshed, and in all this vision patriotic symbolism dominated. Starting with the second half of the XIX century, the myth of Kresy evolves towards “economic post”, where, in agreement with positivistic premises, the Polishness should be propagated and maintained.

Among the phenomena essential for creation of the myth of Kresy, two are worth mentioning, as they are fundamental for this presentation. The first of them is of general character. Poland expanded towards the East, which, from the perspective of the countries or nations being the object of this expansion, was imperial in its character. The conquered nations were threatened, on the part of the Poles, apart from the military domination and economic exploitation, with the process of Polonization (among others, imposition of roman-catholic religion on the followers of the Orthodox Church). However, the status of the Poles was not unambiguous. They, being the colonizers themselves on the eastern borders of the country (de facto, we can speak here of so-called white colonialism), after 1795, became victims of imperial activity of the invaders: Austria, Prussia and Russia. It should be, therefore, stressed, taking into account the synchronous issue, that the inhabitants of Kresy have the status of: a) colonizers (in this group we should include the Poles, who were colonizers towards Ruthenians and the representatives of other nations living on this area), b) the colonized (Ruthenians and other nations towards the Poles and the Poles and the remaining inhabitants of Kresy towards the invaders).

As an example confirming the validity of the use of words “colonizer” and “to colonize”, a fact from the history of Poland after regaining the independence in 1918 can be mentioned. A part of the country decision-makers, as a way of compensation for the wrongdoings of the invaders on the Polish nation, demanded from the international community to grant Poland overseas colonies. There was even the Maritime and Colonial League established whose representatives travelled to Madagascar to verify if the island could serve as a place for potential expansion of the Poles.

The second phenomenon important for the creation of the myth of Kresy concerns the center-outskirts relation. The semantic field of the word “Kresy” reflects this spacial relation- “kresy” as a part of the territory close to the border. This distance contributed to, inter alia, enrichment of the myth with the elements characteristic for the fortress,
where special laws are in force. Attention should be paid to the fact that, after the district partition, the peripheral character of Kresy was maintained, however the notion of the center, so far unambiguously identified with the capital of Poland, was redefined. After 1795, a part of Kresy was under the administrative authority of Vienna, the capital city of Austria, later Austria-Hungary and the other part of Saint Petersburg, the capital city of Russia.

Margaret Kohn, the author of the entry “colonialism” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: “Colonialism- says the American philosopher- is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another”. If we stopped here, we could call the colonizers ancient Greeks, the English under the reign of Queen Victoria, as well as, contemporary to us, the leaders of the numerous religious sects. Nevertheless, to the notion of colonialism- adds Kohn- another one is inseparably connected- imperialism, which relates directly to a specific historical epoch. Its period is delimited by Spanish conquests in the XVI century led on the overseas territories on the one hand, and the sixties of the XX century, when the majority of former colonial territories gained independence. As has already been presented, Poland at that time was both the subject and the object of imperial activity. This imperial activity differed from the classical, canonical colonialism only by the fact that it did not concern the white-color relation and because it took place only in Europe.

Born in 1892 Bruno Schulz was inextricably related to Drohobycz, a middle-size town in Kresy. In connection with the fact that at the time of his childhood this area belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Schulz had the opportunity to receive education in both Lviv - the capital city of Eastern Galicia-and in the capital city of the empire-Vienna. He took advantage of both those possibilities. Nevertheless, life in bigger cultural centers did not attract him. All his life he couldn’t leave the town of his childhood. He was attracted by the atmosphere of Drohobycz - provincial, yet filled with multiculturalism. Drohobycz of that time was a town of many cultures, religions and nations. Schulz was of Jewish origin, but his family was not orthodox. His father was a renowned merchant and ran a store in the center of the town. The future writer didn’t intend to take over father’s business. Since early childhood he demonstrated artistic talent and wanted to be educated in this direction (he studied architecture in Lviv for 3 years, and in 1915 he attended classes at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna for a few months). His debut as a writer came relatively late. The first literary texts were born in the late
twenties of the XX century, as is claimed by his friends in their memoirs as well as by the author himself in the letters written to, among others, a young man of letters Władysław Riff. Since then, this activity became his main form of expression. Until 1942, his 33 stories (or 32, depending on the way of classification) were printed in two collections: *The cinnamon shops* (1933) and *Sanatorium under the sign of the hourglass* (1937). The reception of his works in the thirties of the XX century in Poland was wide, but the readers split evenly between the followers and opponents. Among those first we should enumerate the enthusiasts of vanguard literature. Also, many so-called modern Polish writers of that time publicly praised his works (Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz). Critics saw in his writings mainly signs of decadence of the art and condemned it. It should be also emphasized, that the numerous unfavourable voices were inspired by the growing atmosphere of antisemitism that could be noticed in Poland. The outbreak of the Second World War, 1 September 1939 was the beginning of the personal tragedy of the writer. Drohobycz fell from one occupants’ hands to the other. Initially taken by the Germans, was later turned over to Sovietic Russia together with the majority of Kresy (by virtue of Molotov-Ribbentrop pact treaty of non-aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union). The pact was broken on the 22 of June and Germany took the areas occupied by the Soviets back in their possession. For millions of Jews living on this area, the holocaust began. Schulz, together with other Jews was forced to move to the ghetto built in Drohobycz. Luckily, one of the gestapo members- Feliks Landau, the carpenter form Vienna, embraced him with protection. In exchange for the protection Schulz painted frescos in Landau’s children’s room. 19 of November 1942 on “Black Thursday”, the day of massacre of the Jews from Drohobycz, Landau was shooting from his balcony to the inhabitants of ghetto and killed the protégé of another Gestapo agent-Karl Günther. Günther, to get revenge on Landau, killed Bruno Schulz.

After the war, the works of Schulz did not immediately enter the canon of the reading-matter. The times of socialist realism did not propagate this type of literature. However, the contents of Schulz’s writings, the manner of narration very specific to the author and the unique atmosphere of his stories were rediscovered by influential critics. The propagators of this relatively small but valuable literary output (all the surviving works of Schulz cover around 700 pages) outside Poland were Nobel prize winners and prominent authors of the world literature, like Issak Bélaúis Singer, Bohumil Hrabal, Danilo
Kiš, Philip Roth and John Updike, the author of the article published in New York Times, entitled: Bruno Schulz, hidden genius. However, with the beginning of the eighties the sole figure of the writer became a source of inspiration for other authors. David Grossman made Bruno Schulz one of the main heroes of his book See under: love.

Even though Bruno Schulz lived and created in the reality that could be called colonial or - without doubt - imperial, his literary output was interpreted from the postcolonial criticism perspective by only few researchers. One of the authors who noticed the involvement of the writer in postcolonial relations was Dorota Wojda. The main thesis of her article entitled: Schulzian representations of the cultural border land in the postcolonial perspective pronounced in the year 2007 is the statement according to which the works of Schulz make “decomposition of the opposition establishing the discourse about the Kresy”. Among other writers who wrote about the postcolonialism of Schulzian prose we can also enumerate the already-mentioned Mieczysław Dąbrowski. In his opinion, the literary activity of the author of The cinnamon shops can be included in a broader cultural context. The researcher draws the inspirations for his investigations from worldwide methodological conceptions.

Schulz in the story The Birds (included in The Cinnamon Shops collection) criticizes the figure of the father. The figure gives in to the servant, Adela, who holds enormous power over him:

*Adela merely had to point a finger at him, with a motion suggesting tickling, and already he was fleeing in a wild panic through all the rooms, fastening their doors behind him, finally to collapse in the last, on his stomach on the bed, twisting in convulsions of laughter provoked by that inner vision he could least endure. And thanks to this, Adela held almost unlimited authority over Father.*

It should be emphasized that the figure of the father is fundamental to Schulz. One of its specific features is hybridity. The father, who functions as a patriarch, Father-God, is not only presented as obedient towards the servant but is also shown as a rival to God an alternative demiurge. In the evenings, he gives esoteric lectures to the servants:

*Too long, said my father, have we lived under the terror of the matchless perfection of the Demiurge? Too long has the perfection of his handiwork paralysed our own creativity? We have no desire to compete with him. Our ambition is not to rival him. We merely want to be creators in our own, lower sphere. We crave creativity for ourselves. We crave the joy of creation. We crave, in a word, Demiurgy.*
This is- as far as I’m concerned - the most significant declaration in the whole literary output of Bruno Schulz. In order to fully understand it, we should bring about another figure important to the author- the figure of Franz Joseph I, the emperor of Austria-Hungary. This ruler was identified with the imperial order at the turn of the XIX and XX centuries in Europe. „Franz Joseph I settled down upon everything, and checked the world in its growth”- states the narrator in the story Spring (from Sanatorium under the sign of the hourglass). The metaphysical lectures of the father are, therefore, a kind of gauntlet thrown down to the actual ruler. The father stresses that he doesn’t demand absolute power. „We want to create mankind over again, in the image and semblance of a mannequin”- he says.

Nevertheless, the postcolonial elements are most visible in the descriptions of the city’s outskirts in the story The Street of Crocodiles. In this text the author questions previous center-outskirts literary oppositions. It occurs in two dimensions. First, Drohobycz (this feature can also be observed in other texts of Schulz) ceases to be a provincial town and becomes a center of events. The dimensional system is built in a concentric way with Drohobycz in its center. At this town the powers that be arrive: the diplomats, blue-blooded princes, the artists. This presentation of Drohobycz has no reflection in reality. The other dimension is connected to the town itself. The opposition modern center - conservative outskirts in Schulz is subject to deconstruction. The title Street of Crocodiles is described using epithets connoting the meanings of modernity, openness, etc. The writer, however, does not just reverse the relations and does not use the symmetry technique. The tricks he uses can be interpreted as mimicry.

Whereas in the old town an unlicensed, solemn and ceremonious nocturnal trade still held sway, modern and sober forms of commercialism had sprung up in a trice in that new district. Pseudo-Americanism, implanted in the musty old ground of the town, had shot up there, a lush but empty and colourless vegetation of shabby, paltry pretentiousness. Cheap, poorly constructed tenements were to be seen, their grotesque façades pasted over with monstrous stucco-work of cracked plaster. Ramshackle old suburban houses had hastily acquired botched porticos, which were unmasked only on closer inspection as poor imitations of big city features. By their shaky, dim and dirty panes, fracturing the darkly mirrored street into wavy reflections, by the unplaned wood of their entrances and the grey atmosphere of their barren interiors, with tufts of dust and cobweb settling on their high
shelves and along their tattered and crumbling walls, the stamp of a wild Klondike was impressed on the shops there.

Homi Bhabha affirms that mimicry „emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge“. The inhabitants of the outskirts imitate the big-city patterns and in this way try to prevent the exclusion that threatens their street. Because according to the imperial standards which operate in the center of Drohobycz, the street of crocodiles does not deserve to be included in the map:

On that plan, executed in the style of baroque panoramas, the region of ulica Krokodyli shone in empty white, as the Polar Regions are usually indicated on geographical charts—lands inscrutable and of uncertain existence.

Adoption of the identity of the big city functions not only as nobilitation (in geographical and economic sense). It is also a specific camouflage. The narrator of the story stresses the temporariness and provisional state of the role played by the inhabitants:

Ulica Krokodyli was our town’s concession to modernity and big city debauchery. Apparently, we could afford nothing better than a paper imitation, a photomontage made up of cuttings from last year’s mouldered newspapers.

A careful reading of the story leads to very deceitful conclusions. The battle against exclusion can only be a pretext for the inhabitants, it should be emphasized – a lofty pretext - to accomplish their interests. The backs of their stores are the place of promiscuous erotic events. This suppressed erotism, hidden behind the façade of social and cultural motivations is a specific feature of Schulz’s works and is one of their differentia specifica.

Analyzing the literary output of Bruno Schulz from the postcolonial perspective, the attention should be also paid to the fact of dual ontological structure of the narrator – the protagonist. In the majority of the stories he is presented as a boy: he goes to school, his father and mother take care of him, he depends on the adult background characters. His consciousness however is not childish. This dissonance is visible through sensualistic and transcendental experiences. In the narration constructed in such a way, the relation of power-knowledge, fundamental for post colonialism, can be noticed. The childishness of the protagonist is subordinate to withdrawn, lurking adulthood and is a kind of technique for taking over the reality. The child – narrator - the figure exposed in the foreground - can be interpreted as an expansive figure. Under pretence of infantility and
unawareness the adult that rules it subjugates the reality. In the reality of Schulz’s prose, the figure of a child is a perfect camouflage and serves as a tool for gaining power, a superior value in his prose.

As it results from the presented examples, the postcolonial criticism is an efficient tool in the process of interpretation of the works of Bruno Schulz. In passing it should be pointed out that very interesting evidence for postcolonial character of this literature can be found in the papers devoted to Schulz published at the turn of the XIX and XX centuries. The role of a metaphor in the critical texts devoted to the author of The Cinnamon Shops seems to point to the fact that the literary researchers unconsciously and instinctively classify this literature to the group of postcolonial texts.

Hence the postcolonial method (not methodology) is an important technique for interpretation of the literary output of Bruno Schulz and its application can be justified by the arguments coming from the textual (endogenic) world as well as historical, cultural and economical (egzogenic).

References
KEATS'S VIEWS ON IMAGINATION IN COMPARISON
WITH WORDSWORTHIAN, COLERIDGEAN AND
SHELLEYAN VIEW

Dr Behzad Pourgharib

“If we wish to distinguish a single characteristic which
differentiates the English Romantics from the poets of the eighteenth
century, it is to be found in the importance which they attached to the
imagination and in the special view which they held of it”, says C.M.
Bowra (Bowra, 1957:1). Keats considered imagination to be a divine
force and believed that it reveals truth as the mainstay of artistic
beauty. Keats criticized the eighteenth century poetry mainly for its
want of imaginative qualities. In September 1819, Keats distinguished
himself from Byron by emphasizing his imaginative power: “There is
this great difference between us. He describes what he sees—I describe
what I imagine” (Keats, Letters, 314). Keats, thus, tried to revive the
place of imagination in poetic creation as it was in the Elizabethan
period. Francis Jeffrey in The Edinburg Review, August 1820
distinguishes Keats from divine authors like Milton and says, “The
great distinction, however, between him and these divine authors, is,
that imagination in the is subordinate to reason and judgment, while,
with him, it is paramount and supreme—that these ornaments and
images are employed to embellish and recommend just sentiments,
engaging incidents, and natural characters, while his are poured out
without measure or restraint, and with no apparent design but to
unburden the breast of the author, give vent to the overflowing vein of
his fancy” (Ellershaw, 1931:6). Keats preferred to rely on imagination
rather than on reason as imagination has stronger and more penetrative
eyes. It is the supreme faculty that a poet possesses and because of it
poetry has always been regarded as superior to philosophy and history.
Keats believes that like a historian a poet is not confined to facts alone.
Imagination is a supreme power and its canvass is so large that it can
encompass even history and philosophy as it plays quite independently
and transcends the facts of history to create poetry that is pure and
original. An attempt has been made in the present paper to study
Keats’s scattered remarks on aesthetics particularly on imagination and
to see them in the light of Wordsworth’s, Coleridge’s and Shelley’s
views on imagination as all the three poets belong to the same era and
are the exponents of the same movement in English literature.
Leaving apart Coleridge, Keats was the only critic of his age who had a comprehensive attitude and acumen to poetry. Due to his early demise, he was not able to give final shape and finish to his views in the form of a formal treatise as was done by Wordsworth and Coleridge. However, his scattered remarks pertaining to his aesthetics can be culled from the personal epistles written to the members of his family, friends, relatives, etc. In an informal manner, some of his remarks particularly on ‘the cult of Beauty in all things’ and ‘the role of imagination in poetic creation’ deserves special mention as they help us in evolving his full scale poetics that he not only advocated but also practiced in his own poetical works. Keats’s concept of Beauty is central to his theory of poetic creation because he firmly believes that “with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration” (Keats, Letters: 43). Keats was a pure poet who sought beauty in all things which are even antithetical ones like pleasure and pain, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated, Cleanth Brooks rightly remarks that Keats “explores a particular experience not as a favorite generalization to be beautiful but as an object to be explored in its full ramifications” (Brooks, 1962: 140). Referring to negative capability, Keats very clearly stated that he is always haunted by “Uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Keats, Letters: 43). The negative capability quote refers to the objectivity, impartiality, indefiniteness and open-endedness advocated by Keats in the delineation of Beauty. Imagination, according to Keats, is an agent that perceives Beauty and transfigures the subjective perception of Beauty into the objective or the dispassionate one. It works towards evaporating the irrelevant elements to transform the subjective Beauty into objective or ideal one that is universal and omnipresent. This type of Beauty, when all the irrelevant material present in the form of personal emotion, preconceived philosophical ideals is removed, culminated in Truth and becomes identical with it. It is the power of imagination that activates negative capability in poet. In November 1811, Keats wrote to Bailey, “I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of imagination—what the imaginations seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not” (Keats, Letters:36-37). With the help of intensity of imagination, Keats aimed at the creation of Beauty that is Truth. He
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regards a poet an artist or a creator who by an active exercise of the imagination could create Truth. Keats outlines his concept of excellence in art in his letter of 21, 27 December 1817, written to his Brothers George and Tom Keats: “The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeable evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth” (Keats, Letters: 42). According to Prof. Mohit K. Ray, “These Heart's affections”—are, then, man’s instinctive impulses and, touched by imagination, they form an instinctive spontaneous attitude of the Being which in its sublime is creative of essential beauty. So, beauty, to Keats, is not an external, sensuous entity, out there, but an act of the mind. And this ‘Beauty is Truth’, because intuitive perception is the only means of attaining the Truth in its wholeness” (Ray, 1997:42).

Keats practiced pure poetry without coloring it with any ethical meaning. Keats felt that, “Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one’s soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subject” (Keats, letters:61). It is the power of imagination that keeps a poet away from imposition of philosophy of any sort on his work. His conviction of pure poetry resulted in idealizing poetry with the help of imaginative faculty. In his letter to John Taylor, Keats says:

It touches of Beauty should never be half-way thereby making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the Sun come natural to him—shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the Luxury of twilight… and this leads me on to another axiom. That if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all. (Keats, Letters: 70)

Keats favors a poetic character that does not have any identity that leaves an impression on what the imagination conceives. He wrote to Bailey:

I must say of one thing that has pressed upon me lately and increased my Humility and capacity for submission and that is this truth— Men of genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect—but they have not any individuality, any determined Character. (Keats, Letters: 36)

The true poet is one who has nothing to impart and gifted with the capacity to subdue his own personality. Imagination is an agent that
makes a poet selfless by helping him participate impartially in the objects of perception and depersonalizing his personal emotions as was practiced by Keats in his “Ode to a Nightingale”. Regarding self-annihilation, Keats wrote to Richard Woodhouse on 27 October 1818:

    When I am in a room with People if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of everyone in the room begins to (for so) press upon me that I am in a very little time an(ni)hilated. (Keats, Letters: 158)

In his letter to Bailey written on 22 November 1817, while discussing ‘Men of Genius’, Keats says:

    I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth—....... whether it existed before or not for I have the same idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. (Keats, Letters: 36-37)

Imagination occupies central place in Keats’s aesthetics. When a poet intuitively perceives physical beauty, he is able to discover spiritual beauty which is only identical with Truth. Keats preferred intuition or imagination to logic and reason. He opines that one could not reach after Beauty and Truth through logic and reason only. Reason and logic stops at the finite physical world whereas a poet uses his intuition to explore Truth which represents the world of the infinite. Through reason and logic one can explore only mundane physical beauty which was not the goal of Keats. Prof. Mohit K. Ray refers to oft-quoted passages like— “The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one’s mind about nothing” (Keats, Letters: 326) and “Let us not therefore go hurrying about collecting honey… but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive” (Keats, Letters: 66) and “I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning…. Can it be that even the greatest philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting, aside numerous objections?” (Keats, Letters: 37) and calls the beauty way of attaining truth as the intuitive way (Ray, 1997:42). He writes, “It is clear by now that Keats pleads for an instinctive spontaneous attitude of the being and for the intuitive as opposed to rational knowledge. What is thus apprehended is Truth and the pleasurable of such apprehension is Beauty. Truth can be known only by its beauty, by the
pleasure of ‘feeling one’s being deeply’ the sense of ‘fellowship divine’’’ (ray, 1997:43-44). Keats’s letter written to Benjamin Bailey dated 22 November 1817 explains his attitude towards imagination vis-à-vis logic and reason:

The imagination may be compared to Adam’s dream—he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair because I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning—and yet it must be—Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections? However it may be, O for a life of Sensations rather than of thoughts!... And yet such a fate [of having happiness on earth repeated in the life hereafter] can only befall those who delight in sensation rather than hunger as you do after Truth. (Keats, Letters: 37)

Keats’s poetics does not confine itself to mere physical sensations but goes beyond to include intuitions as only through intuitions a poet can transcend physical beauty and approach aesthetic beauty that is only identical with Truth. The aim of poetry is the creation of beauty and this beauty is a regular stepping of imagination towards Truth” (Keats, Letters:59). Thorpe refers to the nature and function of imagination and writes in this regard,“ An analysis of his utterances on the subject from the middle of 1817 on reveals that he has reached two significant conclusions as to the nature and function of the imagination. First, the imagination as an instrument of intuitive insight is the most authentic guide to ultimate truth; second, the imagination in its highest form is a generative force, in itself creative of essential reality” (Thorpe, 1993:104). This kind of imagination Keats has been attempting to have since the beginning of his career and, no doubt, he achieved it through the practice of the cult of negative capability. Keats elucidates this idea in the letter he wrote to Richards Woodhouse on 27 October 1818:

As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the
camelion poet…. A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body —The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God’s Creatures. (Keats, Letters: 157)

This statement points to the fact that Keats’s aestheticism was related to the composition of pure poetry in which any theme fitted well if not burdened by philosophical or didactic element of any sort and explored impartially by the power of imagination of the poet. Keats preferred to give objective coloring to the moral and religious faith and tried reaching after poetry in which beauty that expresses Truth which is not didactic but only visionary and purely imaginative.

To Keats Beauty and Truth are one and they are perceived by imagination and not by reason as facts and reason are essentially mundane and confined to only phenomenal world. According to Thorpe, “Imagination, with its springs in the heart rather than the head, though the head too has its place, becomes with Keats the highest and most authentic guide to truth. Not only is the imagination to be trusted more implicitly than reason in matters where both are operative, but there are even things clear to the imagination of which the reason knows nothing” (Thorpe, 1993:105). A mind biased with personal prejudices cannot be a fit receptacle to the ultimate truth. It is imagination that frees a poet from preconceived notions and aids him in participating in all types of experience—pain or pleasure, life or death, youth or old age, health or decay, eternity or evanescence, mortality or immortality, modernity or antiquity. This unbiased participation of the poet without leaning towards any dogma and philosophy makes him practice pure poetry devoid of any ethical implications. Imagination functions as a means to save poetry from philosophization and absolutism and keeps it pure and natural. Keats expresses his conviction of pure poetry in his letter to John Taylor in which he writes, “That if poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all” (Keats, Letters: 70). Keats’s letter written to Richard Woodhouse on 27 October 1818 also points towards his aestheticism of pure poetry devoid of any didactic element. He writes, “As to the poetical character itself…. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no identity” (Keats,
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Letters: 157). What the letter points towards is the impartial participation of the poet in all types of experience. Only when a poet allows his imagination a free play without restraining it with any type of reasoning and didacticism, then it creates Beauty that is Truth. According to C.R. Visweswara Reo, “For him imagination is the core of experience and a means of incorporating beauty with truth in a more inclusive reality. Imagination, while consecutive reasoning, as Keats called intellectual analysis, achieves a fusion of object and mind such that the irrelevant and the discordant evaporate. It paves the way for intensity and disinterestedness which combines the splendor of art and the magnificence of life”. (Pathak, 1997:65)

Keats wrote in one of his letters, “I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning” (Keats, Letters: 37). On the contrary, Keats affirms his faith in imagination that obtains a poet from joining any philosophical fold and become indoctrinated. Imagination makes a poet open-ended and receptive to all kinds of experience whether joys or sorrows and in this way saves him from leaning towards any doctrine or dogma. He wrote in one of his letters, “Let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive” (Keats, Letters: 66). Imagination is the main agent in Keatsian poetics that aids the poet in achieving the state of negative capability through transcending worldly facts and reasons and soaring in the realm of mysteries, doubts and uncertainties. Keats was against the doctrine of human perfectibility. He saw creativity in human misfortunes, catastrophes and uncertainties which come in the way of man’s perfection and make his thinking independent and consequently led him towards the path of creativity. Imagination is the faculty on which one can rely to explore various aspects of a subject or even the beings which are beyond a man’s perceptive power. Keats, thus, regards imagination a modifying, sympathizing and identifying power. His phrase “whether it existed before or not” (Keats, letters:36-37) refers to the generative power of imagination. Imagination is a power that creates even those things which are airy nothings and non-existent in this world. The purely phenomenal world may deceive us. But Keats is confident of the generative and modifying power of imagination which is based on intuitive apprehension of the phenomenal world. The intuitive apprehension of beauty is truthful as it is reached by imaginative power of the poet that transcends the phenomenal world and enters into the aesthetic world of art. When Keats declares to Bailey, “Nothing startles me beyond the Moment.
The setting sun will always set me to rights or if a sparrow comes before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel” (Keats, Letters: 38), he is pointing towards the sympathizing and identifying power of the imagination. The power of imagination assists the poet in freezing his own identity and enables him to identify himself with the object of perception whether it is a setting sun or a sparrow. A poet possesses the capacity to participate in the existence of a bird or any other creature and at the same time keeps his own emotions under control without affecting the former with the latter. Keats believes that it is the power of imagination that not only aids a poet in identifying himself with the others but also forces the identity of the others on the poet to forget his own identity completely.

II

Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley not only contributed to the Romantic poetry but also were critical theorists who through their critical writings laid bare their designs behind their creative works. All the three of them, rejected the neo-classical tendency of mechanical application of rules and preferred the power of imagination in the composition of poetry. Wordsworth's statement in the Preface, “The principle object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life… and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect” (Chickera, 1962:164); Coleridge’s introductory statement in chapter XIV of “Biographia Literaria” in which, while referring to the cardinal principles of poetry, he writes, “the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination” (Chickera, 1962:190) and Shelley's statement in the “Defense of Poetry”, “Poetry, in the general sense, may be defined to be ‘the expression of the imagination’” (Chickera, 1962:225) are an announcement of a new type of writing that rejected reason and mechanical application of rules and preferred individuality and novelty, a result of “an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility” (Herford, 2003:XIII). So much importance was given to imagination in this period that Coleridge even calls it the soul of poetry without which poetry remains confined to a chaotic state and merely a perception of worldly objects. In this section of the paper, therefore, views of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley have been discussed in
detail so that in the later section of the paper, they may be compared to Keats’s views on imagination which are scattered in his private correspondence but cannot be ignored altogether as he is also one of the chief contributors to the romantic school of poetry.

Wordsworth in the Preface to 1815 edition, while talking about the powers essential for the production of poetry, regards Imagination and Fancy along with observation and description, sensibility, reflection, innovation and judgment as the powers required for the composition of poetry. According to him, Imagination and Fancy are the powers used in poetry “to modify, to create and to associate” (PTP Ed. 1815). While talking about the subject-matter of poetry, Wordsworth writes in the Preface, “the principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of a language really used by man, and at the same time to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect” (Chickera, 1962:164). Wordsworth, in the above cited lines, refers to the modifying power of imagination that imparts its own colors to the ordinary perceptive things to make them appear novel. Later on in the Preface when he talks about the characteristics of a poet, Wordsworth echoes the same tone when he says that a poet possesses a “disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions” (Chickera, 1962:171). Through the power of imagination, a poet creates images of those things which are absent but through the same power of imagination, they are presented in such a manner as if they are present. What Wordsworth means is that the phenomenal world used as the raw material by a poet is transformed by the modifying power of imagination into an unusual world of poetry. However, the unusual world created by the imaginative power should resemble the natural world. In the Preface to 1815 edition, Wordsworth regards imagination as “the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying power” that also “shapes and creates” (PTP Ed. 1815). Wordsworth writes, Imagination confers “additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to react upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence” (PTP Ed. 1815). Wordsworth makes a distinction between Fancy and Imagination with regard to the processes of their functioning and writes, “When the imagination frames a comparison, if it does not strike on the first
presentation, a sense of the truth of the likeness, from the moment that it is perceived, grows—and continues to grow—upon the mind; the resemblance depending less upon outline of form and features than upon expression and effect; less upon casual and outstanding, than upon inherent internal, properties: moreover, the images invariably modify each other—The law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender or pathetic, as the objects happen to be oppositely produced or fortunately combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which she scatters her thoughts and images; ... she cares not how unstable or transitory may be her influence, knowing that it will not be out of her power to resume it upon an apt occasion. But the imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion…” (PTP Ed. 1815).

Coleridge is one of the greatest critics of the nineteenth century and the first English critic who founded his literary criticism on philosophical basis. His study of imagination which is central to his theory of poetry added a new dimension to the English literary criticism. In the eighteenth century, Fancy and Imagination were considered synonymous terms and often confused with each other. It was Coleridge who made an “observable and definable difference between Fancy and Imagination” (Richards, 1968:31) and “investigated philosophically the “seminal principle of the imagination” (Scott James, 1970:221). In the concluding part of Chapter XIII of ‘Biographia Literaria’, Coleridge not only differentiated between Fancy and Imagination but even categorized imagination into two forms—Primary and Secondary. He writes, “The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.... Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definitions. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time
and space; and blended with, and modified by the empirical phenomenon of the will which we express by the word choice. But, equally with the ordinary memory, it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association” (Shawcross, 1958:202).

The above quoted lines from Chapter XIII of Biographia Literaria which designate different forms and stages of creative process to primary and secondary imagination and distinguish between Fancy and Imagination are vital to Coleridge’s theory and further extend the discussion on the poetic process initiated by Wordsworth. Coleridge restricts the functioning of primary imagination to only perception of objects of sense. Imagination in the primary stage is an involuntary act of the mind that aids a poet in forming a picture of the objects of sense which capture a poet’s attention when he suddenly encounters them. According to Professor Habib, primary imagination “helps us to form an intelligible perspective of the world; this understanding however, is fragmentary; we do indeed perceive God's creation but in a piecemeal, cumulative fashion” (Habib, 2006:446). After the perceptive stage, primary imagination gives way to secondary imagination which is “a shaping and modifying power” that “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates” (Shawcross, 1958:202) the raw material of sense organs supplied by the primary imagination in order to render it into pleasing shape and forms. Secondary imagination is a voluntary and conscious exercise that “breaks down the customary order and pattern in which our senses present the world to us, recreating these into new combinations that follow its own rules, rather than the usual laws of association (Habib, 2006:446). Secondary imagination transcends the finite world of perception to discover the infinite, the ideal and the divine world of poetry where disparate and chaotic material is unified and fixed into an organic whole by its esemplastic power.

The first clause of the definition of Fancy that it has “no other counters to play with, but fixities and definite” when contrasted with the definition of secondary imagination, a power that “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to re-create” makes it clear that the material used for composition both by Fancy and Imagination is the same, whereas the former combines the things and the disparate material employed by it retain their distinct identity, the latter which is a modifying power that “dissolves, diffuses and dissipates” the heterogeneous material into a new shape and order. Fancy for Coleridge is not a creative power as it does not modify and only
combines the material of perception that does not undergo any change. Coleridge calls Fancy “a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space” (Shawcross, 1958:202) but critics do not rule out the use of memory in imagination. Professor Rajnath rightly says, “Memory acts as the supplier of material to both Imagination and Fancy; that is to say, the material the two powers work on is the same. What distinguishes Imagination from Fancy is not the material worked on but the result produced. And the results produced by the two faculties are different. As said above, imagination transmutes the material it operates upon, while Fancy only combines them mechanically” (Rajnath, 2004:44). Fancy, thus, is a combinatory, associationist power that mechanically juxtaposes the disparate material whereas Imagination unifies, reconciles and reshapes the heterogeneous material into an organic unity. Coleridge writes in Chapter XIV of Biographia Literaria, “Good sense is the body of poetic genius, Fancy its drapery, motion its life, and Imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole” (Chickera, 1962:197). Professor Rene Wellek makes Coleridge’s distinction between Fancy and Imagination more clear when he identifies Fancy with talent and Imagination with genius. He writes, “Genius and Imagination are unifying, reconciling: they belong to the level of Coleridge's holistic and dialectical thought, while talent and fancy are only combinatory and thus mechanistic, associationist. Genius is a gift, talent is manufactured; genius is creative, talent mechanical” (Wellek, 1966:164).

According to Wordsworth both Fancy and Imagination are “characterized as the power of evoking and combining” or as Coleridge regards them “the aggregative and associative power” (PTP Ed. 1815). But the difference between Fancy and Imagination according to Wordsworth can be seen in “either the materials evoked and combined are different; or they are brought together under a different law, and for a different purpose. Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch; and, where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose if it be slight, limited, and evanescent. Directly the reverse of these, are the desires and demands of the Imagination. She recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite” (PTP Ed. 1815). Both Wordsworth and Coleridge regard Fancy a combinatory power and Imagination a modifying power. The difference between them is that the materials used and combined in a work of Fancy retain
Keats's Views on Imagination in Comparison:

...their original identities whereas in a work of imagination, they are “dissolved, diffused, and dissipated”, to form a new composition altogether different from the material used in the making. Though Wordsworth regards Fancy as a creative power, Coleridge confines it to only a combinatory power that combines the disparate material that retains its originality. Comparing Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s views on Imagination and Fancy, Rene Wellek aptly writes, “Both Wordsworth and Coleridge make the distinction between Fancy, a faculty which handles ‘fixities and definite’, and Imagination, a faculty which deals with the ‘plastic, the pliant and the indefinite’. The only important difference between Wordsworth and Coleridge is that Wordsworth does not clearly see Coleridge’s distinction between Imagination as a ‘holistic’ and Fancy as an associative power and does not draw the sharp distinction between transcendentalism and associationism which Coleridge wanted to establish” (Wellek, 1955:148).

Shelley is one of the chief exponents of romantic criticism. His "Defense of Poetry" is an important document that provides a profound philosophical insight into the origin, scope and function of poetry. Like the rest of the romantics, Shelley too believes in the primacy of emotion and regards poetry as “the expression of the imagination” (Chickera, 1962:225). Imagination which is an indispensable agency of poetic creation is different from reason. He regards reason as “mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced” (Chickera, 1962:225), and the imagination “as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity” (Chickera, 1962:225). Reason is the “principle of Analysis” whereas Imagination is the “principle of Synthesis” (Chickera, 1962:225). “Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitude of things” (Chickera, 1962:225). The above remarks of Shelley recognize the modifying and unifying power of imagination and run parallel to Coleridge’s concept of secondary imagination. But Shelley does not stop only with aesthetic function of imagination when he says, “Poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers…. A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to
his conceptions time and place and numbers are not” (Chickera, 1962:228). The purpose of poetry is to reform mankind and to spread the ideals of love and liberty. The poet, therefore, is an inspired man. Inspiration provides necessary background to the faculty of imagination. “Poetry is not like reasoning”, says Shelley, “a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, ‘I will compose poetry’. The greatest poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakes to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are un-prophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet” (Chickera, 1962:250-51). Barring Coleridge, perhaps no other Romantic critic has exposed so philosophically the role of imagination in a creative act as done by Shelley.

III

Like Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, Keats also attaches great importance to imagination and held that imagination plays a key-role in the poetic process and without it the poetic process remains incomplete. Keats agrees with Coleridge that imagination helps a poet in achieving complete objectivity. He thinks that when an artist is endowed with negative capability, he needs nothing except following perfect passivity for allowing his imagination free play in the field of creative activity without impediment put up by the prepossessed dogmas and knowledge. Keats like Hazlitt believes that a poet must be open to all types of experiences alike and remain alive to the truth of nature expressed in a work of art regardless of its kind or degree. An artist who is receptive to all types of experiences—even the opposite ones, has this capacity and it is the power of imagination which aids him in completely identifying himself with the object of perception keeping him aloof from his prepossessed choices. The power of imagination facilitates a poet in observing impersonality, overcoming rigidity by letting him participate in all types of experiences even the contrary ones like joys and sorrows, life and death, heaven and hell. Keats wrote to Bailey,“ Nothing startles me beyond the moment. The
setting sun will always set me to rights—or if a Sparrow comes before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel” (Keats, Letters: 38). This process in which a poet loses his identity and identifies himself with the object of perception which leaves its impression on the poet to make him forget his own identity is akin to Coleridge's concept of secondary imagination in which mind colored by the object of perception becomes one with the object of perception and object of perception colored by the mind becomes one with the mind for the truth lies neither in the mind of the poet nor in the object of perception but in the identification of both.

Imagination for Keats is a generative power that creates something new or different from the original sensory material. Keats believes with Coleridge that imagination does not stop at the perception only. Like Coleridge who regards secondary imagination a power that “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to re-create” (Shawcross, 1958:202), Keats too accepts the modifying and transfiguring power of imagination. However, Keats does not distinguish between primary and secondary imagination as Coleridge does when he assigns different functions to the two types. While primary imagination for Coleridge is only a perceptive power that works only on sense impressions and constructs a poetic world through them whereas secondary imagination is a more powerful agent that consciously employs all the faculties of the soul together in the process of composition. When Coleridge says that secondary imagination “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to re-create” (Shawcross, 1958:202), what he means is a professor Rajnath has rightly said, “Primary imagination only constructs, whereas secondary imagination both destroys and constructs, destroys the world of primary imagination to construct the world of poetry” (Rajnath, 2004:41). Keats too recognizes the two functions of imagination—perceptive and transfiguring or modifying. Imagination for Keats is an agent that perceives Beauty and works on it to remove the irrelevant, mundane, subjective and temporary elements from it to transform it into objective and ideal one. Thus, for Keats, imagination not only perceives through sense organs but also modifies the world of perception, which has so many irrelevant and discordant elements in it in the form of personal emotions and preconceived ideas, into the world of Truth which according to him cannot be reached by only perception. Keats wrote to Bailey in November 1817, “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart’s affection and the truth of
imagination—What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not” (Keats, Letters: 36-37).

Although Keats agrees with Coleridge in regarding imagination as a modifying power, he does not believe imagination as a modifying power that contributes to organic wholeness. Imagination for Coleridge unites discordant or disparate material into an organic whole. According to Coleridge, “The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination” (Chickera, 1962:196). Keats, on the other hand, is against all types of fixities and definite. Imagination for him is an agent that contributes to negative capability, i.e. the frame of mind which enables an artist to remain in the state of “uncertainties, doubts, mysteries without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Keats, Letters: 43). For him imagination extends the finites and absolutes into infinity and indefiniteness and contributes to open-endedness, multiplicity and impersonality which are the hallmarks of a genius. Imagination abstains a poet from taking any fixed and final stand and aids him in exploring all the aspects of a subject—positive as well as negative without siding with either of them. Referring to this all-inclusive, all embracing capacity of imagination, Bate rightly says, “Third, the door is further opened to the perception—which he was to develop within the next few months—of the sympathetic potentialities of the imagination” (Bate, 1967:243). The sympathetic potentiality of imagination makes a poet participate in all types of experience even the opposite ones and makes him forget his own personality. Only when a poet sympathetically identifies himself with the object of perception, he is able to explore all the aspects of the subject keeping the irrelevant material away from the main one. While for Coleridge, imagination unites the opposites into a unified whole, for Keats it separates the irrelevant material from the main one and in this way moves towards creating Beauty and Truth which should be the ultimate aim of a poet. Negative Capability letter also refers to the problem of intensity in poetic creation. The intensifying power of the imagination grasps only those features of the objects which are relevant to the central conception. Under the working of the intensity of imagination the disagreeable evaporate and what remains is only beautiful and truthful.
Both Wordsworth and Coleridge regard imagination a transforming and modifying power that presents the usual in an unusual light. The poet does not merely stop at the raw material provided by the sense impressions but through the working of imagination shapes, modifies and transfigures the raw material into a final entity of eternal and universal significance. Coleridge while distinguishing between primary and secondary imagination regards primary imagination a weaker power which stops only at the act of perception while secondary imagination is a modifying power which recreates what is perceived by the primary imagination. Keats, like Wordsworth, favors spontaneity in poetic creation. He writes, "I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity… the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the Sun come natural to him—That if poetry comes not as naturally as leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all” (Keats, Letters:69-70). We can infer from the above letter that Keats advocated spontaneous and natural expression that takes place under intensity of imagination. Imagination for Keats is an involuntary, unconscious and spontaneous activity that functions under the intensity of feelings. In this respect, Keats meets Coleridge’s conception of primary imagination as an agent that uses the faculty of perception involuntarily and unconsciously when it encounters an object or a phenomenon. However, Keats in spite of regarding imagination as a creative and modifying power like Coleridge does not agree with him in respect to its functioning under duress, force or at conscious will. Keats’s exclamation, “Oh, for a life of Sensation rather than of Thoughts” (Keats, Letter: 37), in which by sensations he means intuition, provides us a clue to his theory of poetry. Unlike Coleridge who regards secondary imagination a deliberate working together of all the faculties of the soul in the process of creation, Keats regards imagination as an involuntary, unconscious and spontaneous act involved in the process of creation.

When Shelley defines imagination as “mind acting upon those thoughts so as to color them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity” (Chickera, 1962: 225), he is voicing Wordsworth’s, Coleridge’s and Keats’s views on imagination as a modifying and transforming power. Whereas Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats think of imagination as power that transforms the worldly objects of perception into a higher, universal and an ideal world that provides pleasure, Shelley in the aforesaid lines apart from
transforming objects of perception also includes thoughts—which are also modified by the power of imagination when mind acts upon them to provide its own color to them so that thoughts of higher type which approximate “the eternal, the infinite and the one, as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and member are not” (Chickera, 1962:228) can be conceived. Shelley assigns philosophical function to imagination that through its transfiguring power aids a poet in approximating Platonic world of ideal reality. Imagination is a faculty that through its own coloring recreates knowledge of the material world to elevate it to the ideal world for moral purpose to reform mankind. Professor David Daiches says in this regard, “For Shelley an exercise of the imagination which brought one into contact with the Platonic idea underlying the ordinary phenomena of experience was, in the larger sense, poetry” (Daiches, 1956:112). While Keats regards imagination as an agent that explores the “uncertainties, mysteries and doubts” (Keats, Letters: 43) which constitute imperfectability of human world, Shelley regards imagination a power that assists a poet in transcending sorrows, sufferings, injustices and discriminations prevailing in the human world through the colors of imagination to create an ideal world free from any type of inconsistencies and frailties. Shelley believes in the perfectibility of human life, whereas Keats celebrates imperfectabilities. Keats opposes any attempt at sermonizing and moralizing as was attempted and advocated by Wordsworth and Shelley and regards poetry as an expression of one’s emotions and feelings. According to him, “The poetry of ‘Lear’, ‘Othello’, ‘Cymbeline’, etc., is the poetry of passions and affections made almost ethereal by the power of the poet” (qtd. by Thorpe, 1926:200). He again writes in “Sleep and Poetry”:

“They shall be accounted poet kings
Who simply tell the heart-easing things”. (KPD: 49-50)

Keats wanted to “carve out a separate kingdom for arts” (Hough, 1953:156), whereas Shelley wanted to extend the services of art for social welfare. In his letter written to Shelley on 16 August 1820, Keats condemns Shelley for his social and political leanings which he thinks are obstacles in the way of the achievement of the state of negative capability so necessary for a pure poet:

I received a copy of the Cenci, as from you from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of; the Poetry, and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now a days is considered the mammon. A
modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be God—An artist must serve Mammon; he must have ‘self-concentration’ selfishness perhaps. You, I am sure will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and ‘load every rift’ of your subject with ore. (Keats, Letters: 389-90)

In the above quoted letter Keats admires Shelley for “poetry and dramatic effect” but shows his displeasure against Shelley’s involvement in other subjects like progress of humanity and social welfare. His advice to Shelley “to be more of an artist” and “load every rift of his subject with ore” expresses his faith in pure poetry uncontaminated by moral and social causes. Keats, thus, regards imagination a power that transfigures the phenomenal world of perception into an aesthetic world of beauty, whereas Shelley regards it a power that modifies imperfect phenomenal world of perception and thoughts into an ideal Platonic world of perfection.

IV

Thus, all the romantics—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats attached great importance to imagination and deviated from neoclassicism that preferred reason over it. All of them recognize the perceptive and modifying power of imagination; however, they differ from each other in some respects. Coleridge’s concept of secondary imagination that recommends a synthesis of opposite or discordant elements like subject and object, mind and matter, finite and infinite is seen as parallel to Keats’s concept of intensity of imagination that aids a poet in sympathetic identification with the object perception. While for Coleridge, secondary imagination is a deliberate and conscious power that works under duress, Keats here parts ways from him when he regards poetry solely a natural and spontaneous activity. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, Keats was a romantic to the core. He regards poetry a result of “a life of sensations rather than of thoughts” and rejects reason as a vehicle of reaching after beauty and truth when he writes, “I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning” (Keats, Letters: 37). Keats has not distinguishes between Fancy and Imagination as done by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Similarly, he has also not categorized different functions and stages of imagination into primary and secondary as Coleridge does. But he indirectly refers to
the functions of primary and secondary imagination as perceptive and modifying respectively in the course of his private correspondence. Besides perceptive and modifying powers of imagination as recognized by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, Keats also recognized the sympathizing, identifying, intensifying and impersonalizing powers of imagination that assist a poet in the act of creation by “making all disagreeable evaporate” (Keats, Letters: 42) under intensity to reach the state of negative capability so necessary for pure poetry detached from moral and social leanings. According to Prof. R.S. Pathak, “In fact, the ability of poetic imagination to concentrate on a segment of truth and explore it intimately without confusing it with the sole truth or other segments of reality is what Keats calls “negative capability”—the capability “of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Pathak, 1998:208). By referring to the intensifying, identifying, sympathizing and impersonalizing powers of imagination, Keats enlarged its scope from perceptive and modifying power as assigned by Wordsworth and Coleridge and moralizing power as by Shelley.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF IDEALISM AND EDUCATION

Dr. Deepshika Banerji

Idealism is usually understood as the view that mind is the most basic reality. Though the Idealism in both East and West has conveyed a variety of meanings. Presently it is understood as existence of ideas in the mind of man. It is also held that the universe has some kind of will and all material things can be explained in terms of an intelligence standing behind them.

In Western Philosophy, Idealism began with Socrates and Plato. Socrates discussed problems with Parmenides and Protagorus, while Plato claimed that there is a real world of ideas which the empirical world copies. In the Allegory of the cave in his work The Republic, he examines the world of ideas, stating that the material world is a world of shadows since it is knowable only to the senses. The world of ideas is a world of perfection. It is knowable only through the intellect.

After the Greeks, Idealism was again taken up by the early Christian scholars like St. Augustine in his work, De Magistro, - An enquiry into the origin of ideas. But it was the contribution of the post Renaissance philosophers that modern Idealism came into existence. For example French philosopher Rene Descartes said, that the self was the reality. The self has an idea of all that is perfect. Spinoza claimed that there is a eternal substance which is a thinking being, man is a part of that eternal substance. And Leibniz too supported Idealism by saying that the world is made of atoms of physical and mental force.

Idealism was further developed by George Berkeley, Immanuel Kant and Hegel. Berkeley felt that that the world we experience depends upon our perception for its existence in the form in which we know it. The necessary substratum of the world exists independently. Kant too agrees that there is something which is the Thing –in-itself, which is unknowable. He also says that the mind contributes both quality and unity to the objective world. The culmination of the Idealism came with Hegel, who said that the phenomenal world with all its manifold interrelationships is a manifestation of an infinite mind which realizes itself in finite and temporal processes. He also said, that thought, history, social institutions, politics, ethics, religion, art, and many others are phases of this eternal activity of this Absolute Mind.

Idealism was developed in Germany by A. Schopenhauer, in France, Henri Bergson, made it popular, the Idealist influence spread to
Italy through Croce and Gentile, and in England, it was reflected in the poetry of Coleridge and the work of Carlyle. In America, Emerson, Harris, Royce, Borden Brown and James Creighton were the main Idealist philosophers.

Idealism in education implies that education is an awakening from within. It is a development of the self. But the western philosophers believe that the objectives of education are both social and individual. Gentiles was of the opinion, that the objective of the individual is self realization, he evolves into a complete unity with a full understanding of his own essential nature which he obtains by assimilating various fractional selves.

B.B.Bogoslovsky considers knowledge, as a process of realization of the total outlook through competent specialists of universals, which help in achieving a superior life. This implies that the aim of education is to help students’ live rich and significant lives. Yet another idealist, Herman Horne, said, that truth, beauty and goodness are the spiritual ideals of humanity and education helps a person achieve these goals. Education also equips a person to face the realities and challenges of human existence. Both Bogoslovsky and Horne are of the opinion that the objectives of education are to train individuals to be perfect so that they can come as close to absolute truth as possible. However, the idealists do not differentiate between the objectives of education and the objectives of society.

The American idealist Bogoslovsk, feels that the aim of education should be to inculcate a feeling of brotherhood. Education should teach persons to approach their fellowmen not by claiming superiority, but by gentleness and human understanding. there are two forces working in society. One is the aspect which clamours for a change, or the mobility aspect, and the other is the aspect of equilibrium, which emphasizes on the conservation of the past. The aim of education is to bring about the absolute balance of both these forces.

Another idealist, William Hocking, thinks that social aims are a type of communication that provides a provision for growth. Racial inheritance is passed on to the learner because without it he would remain in a cultural vacuum. Hocking, thus stresses on education as a tool for stability and for change. However, there can be contradictions in this view till the domains are clearly defined. In fact it is Horne, who sums up the idealist aim of education, both for the individual and the society, when he claims that education is the process of adjustment-
physical and mental development of the free and conscious human being, who manifests himself, through his intellect and his will.

The individual and social objectives are realized through the medium of educational institutions because education is treated as a natural and spiritual necessity. Culture is imbibed through education; a person becomes socially, culturally and spiritually aware of himself and all around him. He learns social interaction in a broader perspective. The social nature of man seeks justification in the existence of educational institutions. In fact, the educational institution is an extension, a representative and a miniature agent of society. The educational institution inculcates values of all kinds like social, ethical, aesthetical etc. even though the home environment usually begins this process.

For the Idealists, the main focus is on the pupil, since the learner is to be educated in a desirable manner. Gentile sums up the whole process by remarking, that the teacher must not stop at the classification of the pupil or at the external observation of his pace or his behaviour. He must enter into the very mind of the child where his life is gathered. Horne claims that the learner is a finite person who when educated properly has the potential to grow into an infinite personality since a person is basically free, divine and immortal. However, the pupil cannot achieve self-fulfillment until he is made ready to do so. Thus man is prepared through self activity to achieve self realization by the education he receives. That is why Horne claims that education is the clearest expression of the transcendent self activity of reality within the framework of time. It is as though, in realizing his destiny, man fulfills what was ordained for him. His self activity is his effort to realize himself. The aim of education is to teach discrimination between good and evil. It also teaches a person to pursue what is good and to avoid what is evil. The idealist philosophers describe an idealist as a person who values human beings and other living beings. His quest is to look for truth goodness and beauty. He learns to come to terms with the world of reality. Thus for the idealist, the aim of education is self realization by seeking self perfection.

In the educational aspect of idealism, the role of the educationist is very significant. He is a role model for the individual to emulate, as he exerts a marked influence on the personality of the pupil. The educator not only, has a complete knowledge of his pupil he also commands respect and is friendly with them. He is, in fact, a mentor, who
motivates as well as educates. The educator not only educates but is also a learner. He not only perfects his pupils he also perfects himself. The educator strives for a complete self realization for his pupil so that his aspirations reach their culmination. In the process he himself progresses on path of perfection. Thus the real characteristics of an idealist teacher are his aspiration to achieve perfection. He is like his idealist pupil but more matured in his outlook. He ensures growth, and plays his role as an educator.

The idealist philosophers also discuss the learning process including the curriculum. This includes whatever a person learns by his own and also what he learns by virtue of his education. This includes two categories, the first includes activities like, imitation interest, efforts, self activity etc. while subjects books etc. form the second category. The idealists give maximum priority to the human behaviour of imitation because they feel that imitation is a part of society’s process to bring about a new will in the learner. Horne goes a step further in highlighting the significance of imitation by saying ‘The child, through imitating others, becomes aware of his own capacity for a wide variety of acts that he otherwise would have believed were beyond his powers.’ Therefore it is the process of learning which has to be encouraged in order to make education successful. It is essential for the learner to be exposed to experiences of the past and the present. Ethical, religious, aesthetic, social and cultural values are to be inculcated in order to make education successful, according to idealist thought.

Horne emphasizes on effective use of self activity which involves in making connections and following the law of apperception. Hocking also agrees with Horne by saying that interest permeates all learning activities. Idealist philosophers feel that interest is supplemented with effort. The idealists do not rule out the concept of discipline in the learning process. The idealists also attach great importance to the self activity of the learner because they feel that learning occurs due to the interest, effort and will of the learner. The social setup, like parents teachers etc. can only help in creating a suitable environment but the learning is actually done by the learner himself. Through his free will he develops until he cultivates his own view of life.

The educational curriculum is fashioned in a way to enhance the learner’s exposure to various areas of knowledge, such as sciences, social sciences, fine arts, practical arts etc. the information he receives becomes knowledge and ideas become ideals. However, the idealists
do not limit knowledge to mere bookish knowledge since they stress on experiential knowledge. The knowledge acquired through experience has far reaching consequences in the life of the learner. It is worthwhile to mention the methodology used by idealist thinkers, who as educators and mentors do not cripple the pupils free expression and thought by compelling them to follow their convictions. On the contrary, they use a method of questioning and discussion to provoke the pupil to make judgments of his own. The purpose of this is to stimulate the individual thinking in the learner. Usually the judgments made are based on the learner’s varied background and unique individuality. There is however, the danger of the discussion turning into a pointless verbal exercise. Besides this, is the well known lecture method, where the educator exposes the precepts and beliefs of a subject interpreting it as wisely as possible. Even in such lectures care is taken to keep the lecture open to questions so that there is always space for interactive sessions. Last but not the least is the project method, which the idealists consider a technique in teaching. Projects are undertaken either singly or in groups, learners visit areas under study and make their own observations, they collect data and material which brings them to a definite conclusion. The project method is a definite exercise to encourage creativity and free expression of individual thought.

While concluding this paper it is necessary to evaluate the philosophy of idealism and its approach to education. The strength of the philosophy of idealism lies in its comprehensiveness. The idealists treat knowledge as a thing which generates awareness they are opposed to dogmatism, they treat a subject under study adequately. But on the other hand, their strength becomes their weakness because the objectives of education often slip into obscurity because a realistic approach is lacking. This theory also takes for granted a certain amount of intellectuality of the learner. Lastly, it tends to become abstract and unreal as it becomes difficult to realize it in operational.

References
Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* offers its central figure Saleem’s “his/story” as an individual mode of history writing as metafiction, one the major as a postcolonial literary techniques, that depends on and elevates individual experience as opposed to conventional scientific historiography which attempts to totalize individual experience. This consists of personal historical accounts of Saleem which are mingled with magic realism and the self-reflexive, non-linear and unreliable narration of the text. An attempt as such can be regarded as making the silenced individual in the grand narrative of history speak in that the individual becomes the centre, and his voice is in conflict with that of the dominant and hence multivocal. To argue this, Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* can be analyzed in terms of historiographic metafiction, in which “ex-centric” voices that are pushed to the sidelines of “official” histories are represented (Hutcheon 1991: 95).

*Midnight’s Children* depicts the attempts of Saleem Sinai to write his autobiography. Saleem believes that his body is literally falling apart, so he decides to tell his life story in order to give meaning to his life. He regards this as the only possible way of getting rid of the cracks in his body and in his identity as well. The novel opens with Saleem’s confessing the exact time of his birth. He feels obliged to utter the fact that he was born at the exact time of the independence of India:

*I was born in the city of Bombay ... once upon a time. No, that won’t do, there’s no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar’s Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it’s important to be more ... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. [...] Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India’s arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. (MC p. 9)*

As a result of Saleem’s particular position as a midnight’s child born at the time India gained its independence from the colonial rule, his life story goes hand in hand with that of the nation. Saleem blends his life with the political life of his country, claiming: “I had been
mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country” (MC p.9). When the novel unfolds, it is seen that the whole plot is developed according to this belief of Saleem’s, and he is seen as the comic hero of the postmodern novel to whom history becomes handcuffed rather than the opposite.

The repetition of this claim in the novel overemphasizes the significance of the relation of his birth to the liberation of the nation itself. Saleem makes it known that his birth was celebrated by newspapers, and even the Prime Minister, Nehru wrote a letter to celebrate his symbolic birth but ironically the reader knows that it is a formal letter with some clichés sent to every baby born at the same night with Saleem. The letter and the headings cut from newspapers were hung on the wall of his room, and it reflects the illusory and comic condition in which Saleem grows up: “You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India,” reads Nehru’s letter to Saleem, “which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own” (MC p. 122).

This so-called historical significance of his birth gives the opportunity to Saleem to comment on the political and historical events in the Indian past. Because Saleem is, as he claims, handcuffed to history by his accidental birth, his autobiography reflects not only his individual life story but also the entire history of postcolonial India.

This is the reason for the presence of historical personages and events in the novel that are referred to along with the life story of the protagonist from his birth to adulthood; and the mingling of the real with the personal, the historical with the fictional, gives way to Saleem’s “his/story” conflicting with the official history of India. All the major events in Saleem’s life are made to correspond to important political events in Indian history; thereby, a parallelism is created between the life story of the protagonist and the history of the nation ironically in Saleem’s imagination because this parallelism is created through mere coincidences as Saleem says, “such historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled, my family’s existence in the world” (MC p.27). Among the most prominent past events are the Emergency Rule, the civil war between India and Pakistan, Partition, and Amritsar Massacre. Rushdie includes various historical figures such as Mian Abdullah, General Zulfiqar, Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, and Indira Gandhi as his characters in the novel.

M. Keith Booker asserts that the postcolonialist challenge to the colonialist historiography is carried out on the grounds that “in the
colonial situation, the only true historical event is the process of colonization and its aftermath, leaving no room for the colonized world to have a history of its own independent of the history of the European bourgeoisie” (287). British domination of India means the imposition on India of Western notions of history. With this regard, the whole of the Indian nation can be regarded as constituting the victim of history as the colonized nation whose voice is silenced in the process of history writing. Accordingly, it is seen as an outcome of the interest of postcolonial novelists in historical novels to “draw upon alternative visions of historical process derived from their own indigenous cultural traditions and historical experiences” (Booker 288). What Rushdie tries to do is to create alternatives not only to events but also to the discourse of history that narrates these events.

In *Midnight’s Children*, the subversion of the so-called objective historical discourse is achieved through the intermingling of metafictional strategies and historical reality. As *Midnight’s Children* is about its central figure’s struggle to write his autobiography, which resembles Henri’s diary writing in many ways in being personal as opposed to the objectivity of history writing, the novel is by its very nature about fiction writing itself. If one considers “the Chinese box structure” that Hutcheon puts forward in *Narcissistic Narrative* as one of the fundamental elements of metafictional novels (1980: 57), it is observable that Saleem, a fictional character himself, composes his autobiography which consists of equally fictional elements that he makes up to appropriate the past events into his version, hence acting the role of a novelist. He is the narrator in the novel but at the same time a writer of his autobiography, and throughout his narration he reminds the reader continually of the fictional nature of the story he is telling by means of his self-reflexive remarks.

Above all this, Rushdie is there as the writer of the novel and “we” as the readers. This quality of the novel makes *Midnight’s Children* a novel about fiction writing and draws attention to its status as an artifact, and the inclusion of historical events and personages in the novel’s metafictional context implies their fictionality and problematizes them as well. Saleem is highly self-conscious as the narrator/writer of the novel, which makes it possible for him to reflect his writing process throughout the novel. In the course of his narration,
Saleem comments on his writing process, particularly on the digressive nature of his narrative and the errors he has made. These comments make explicit Saleem’s consciousness of his position as a writer and of his writing process. In the following quotation, Saleem directly refers to his writing as a piece of literature, an autobiography composed of fictional elements along with what he actually lived: Because I am rushing ahead at breakneck speed; errors are possible, and overstatements, and jarring alterations in tone; I’m racing the cracks, but I remain conscious that errors have already been made, and that, as my decay accelerates (my writing speed is having trouble keeping up), the risk of unreliability grows […] in autobiography, as in all literature, what actually happened is less important than what the author can manage to persuade his audience to believe. (MC p.270-271) Saleem shows his reader how he tries hard to follow the order in which he wants to narrate his story. For example, he hides from the reader the fact that it is Mary Pereira who looks after his son until the right moment for this revelation comes.

Due to his comment on this, the focus is again on the process of writing rather than the product itself: Someone speaks anxiously, trying to force her way into my story ahead of time; but it won’t work […] wait on! She nearly wormed it out of me then, but fortunately I’ve still got my wits about me, fever or no fever! Someone will just have to step back and remain cloaked in anonymity until it’s her turn; and that won’t be until the very end. (MC p.209)

Other than the comments on his ordering of the events in the narrative, Saleem comments on his choice of a title for the chapter he is writing and tries to justify it as suitable when the title and the contents of the chapter are taken together: I have titled this episode somewhat oddly. ‘Alpha and Omega’ stares back at me from the page, demanding to be explained – a curious heading for what will be my story’s half-way point, […] but, unrepentantly, I have no intention of changing it, although there are many alternative titles […] But ‘Alpha and Omega’ it is; and ‘Alpha and Omega’ it remains. Because there are beginnings here, and all manners of ends; but you’ll soon see what I mean. (MC p. 223) Saleem tells his life story to his future wife, Padma. She is illiterate so she has to be satisfied with the amount Saleem consents to give out; even though she serves as Saleem’s listener, she is at the same time his critical reader/listener who comments on his narrative. Other than “we” as the actual readers of the novel, the existence of a reader/listener along with the narrator/writer within the novel
completes “the Chinese box structure” of the novel. According to Padma, Saleem only “does some foolish writery”; she utters, “[f]orgive, Saleem baba, but I must tell it truly” (MC p. 193). The presence of Padma as his listener gives Saleem opportunities to make humorous commentary on his own writing process. After revealing that he is going to digress again, Saleem immediately quits the idea lest Padma as his listener gets irritated. Thus, with its self-reflexive elements, the following quotation denotes the constructed nature of what Saleem narrates: I must interrupt myself. I wasn’t going to today, because Padma has started getting irritated whenever my narration becomes self-conscious, whenever, like an incompetent puppeteer, I reveal the hands holding the strings; but I simply must register a protest. So, breaking into a chapter which, by a happy chance, I have named ‘A Public Announcement’, I issue (in the strongest possible terms) the following general medical alert: ‘A certain Doctor N. Q. Baligga […] is a quack. Ought to be locked up, struck off, defenestrated. […] Damn fool,’ I underline my point, ‘can’t see what’s under his nose!’ (MC p. 65)

The role of the reader of a metafictional text, as Hutcheon argues, is no longer that of a passive receiver, but that of an active participant in the writing process: “the reader’s task becomes increasingly difficult and demanding, as he sorts out the various narrative threads. The universe he creates, he must then acknowledge as fictional and of his own making” (1980: 49). Accordingly, Midnight’s Children as a metafictional novel, with parody and ironic intentions, demands of the reader to be an active participant in the creation of the text as the narrator wants the reader to fill in certain gaps in the novel. Saleem points out his inefficiency as a writer, so he makes it clear, in a humorous way of course, that there are points in his narrative which the reader must complete on his own: “I have not, I think, been good at describing emotions – believing my audience to be capable of joining in; of imagining for themselves what I have been unable to re-imagine, so that my story becomes yours as well” (MC p. 293, italics in original). The metafictional implications where the narrator is self-conscious are used to parody the realistic and historical representation of autobiography, historical novels, or history writing because these are imitated with a critical distance and are in conflict with the context of
the novel. The distance and incongruity between the expected representation of the past events, maybe in an objective way, and Saleem’s fictitious accounts with self-reflexive comments are conveyed to the reader by the use of irony in *Midnight’s Children*. Therefore, as Hutcheon formulates in *Theory of Parody*, irony becomes “the main rhetorical mechanism for activating the reader’s awareness of this dramatization [the critical/ironic distance between the parodying and the parodied texts]” (1985: 31). It is part of the parodic discourse that enables the reader to evaluate the difference between the texts and it can be “playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive” (Hutcheon 1985: 32). Rushdie creates an irony between the conventions of autobiography, historical novel, and history writing and those of Saleem’s autobiography. For example, Saleem claims throughout the whole novel that he is narrating the accounts “quite unequivocally” (*MC* p. 338); what the reader finds however is nothing but fiction, a fairy tale.

The function of irony in *Midnight’s Children* is subversive because, according to Hutcheon, “there is both a division or contrast of meanings [the semantic function of irony] and also a questioning, a judging [its pragmatic function]” (1985: 53). This parodic intention of the writer serves as a tool to prove that historical accounts are artifacts. In the following quotation, Saleem tries to formulate the real reasons for the Indo-Pakistani war and to stick to the facts; however, what follows is a fictional explanation, which forces the reader to question the historical event: Important to concentrate on good hard facts. But which facts? […] If it happened, what were the motives? Again, a rash of possible explanations: the continuing anger which had been stirred up by the Rann of Kutch; the desire to settle, once-and-for-all, the old issue of who-should-possess-the Perfect Valley? […] I present two of my own: the war happened because I dreamed Kashmir into the fantasies of our rulers; furthermore, I remained impure, and the war was to separate me from my sins. (*MC* p. 338-339) Parody in *Midnight’s Children* not only ridicules and pinpoints the process through which Saleem’s autobiography is constructed but it also, as Hutcheon highlights it, makes it possible to yield new ways of representing reality.

Thus, it enables Rushdie to interrogate the discourse of traditional historiography on the one hand, and historical novel on the other. It offers new grounds for Rushdie to represent the voice of the individual. The metafictional strategies exploited in *Midnight’s Children* highlight its status as an artifact and, by means of metafiction, Rushdie’s novel is
able to show historical “reality” as constructed and problematizes its objectivity. When the novel inserts real historical events into the metafictional context of the novel, it questions the boundary between so-called fact and fiction. Metafiction as a postcolonial literary technique and Rushdie’s parody are there to show that there is no absolute truth or objectivity in the representation of the past. Therefore, in a subversive novel such as that of Rushdie’s, history, “although ultimately a material reality (a presence), […] is also ‘fictional,’ also a set of ‘alternative worlds’” (Waugh 106).

References

CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS IN ALICE MUNRO’S SHORT STORY – 'NO ADVANTAGES'

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New Historicism brings out an understanding of historical conditions. It brings out the desire to explore the background which acts as a motivation for the story. It is important to know the causality that led to the creation of the story. Though it may not be familiar to our knowledge, we create the past without our own present modifying what our mind used to. This sets to discover the historical context which serves as a source, for within it is a mixture of geography, ethnography, mythography, sociology and other human science, an idea that was originally suggested by Herodotus. There are concepts with the difference in their approach to a literary text. I believe that New Historicism can bring out the literariness of the text in a better way. To create, understand and admire everything that goes into forming the text and giving it life – the language, emotions, characters, religion, culture, history, landscape and even animals.

The New Historicist perspective gives a free entry into the domain of history, sociology, culture, politics, religion, economics and art, as it relates to the authenticity of historical situations, people, trade, beliefs etc., which a narrative text represents. It is through the comparison of similarities that traced present themselves in history and the literary text.

In this process we tend to intrude into matters that have affected the lives of people the text represents. New Historicism is a practice through which we can gain wisdom on the matters that affect the lives of ordinary people; those which have not been recorded by historians. The New Historical study is concerned with finding the authenticity of the representation utilized by the creative power that shapes literary works outside the narrow boundaries in which it had until now been located. A formalistic approach to the narrative text will not help us locate the representations which exist elsewhere. Indeed, the formalistic approach will not allow a search for details embedded in the text and does not give me the elements to prove the authenticity of the representations. Criticism becomes in this context, a tool to explore the form and the content of a literary work which helps in determining the accuracy of the historical aspect it represents. For Criticism is just
not about understanding a literary text alone. I propose to seek authentic proof of how the literary works of Alice Munro represent history and the social voices through the ideas offered by New Historicism.

This return to history has helped to examine the implicit assumptions of representations that are embedded within the text. Close analysis of texts will show how unaware of themselves the writers have produced works that represent the culture from where it has emerged. For, what seems to be the context of the story in the text is not exactly its context. The search for the compressed meaning leads not to the text, but to a context that exists outside the text. As critics say, the absence of a center means the absence of a subject and the absence of an author, making the reader responsible for what he creates with his interpretation. But again the interpretation of the reader is restricted by evidence the reader requires to support the authenticity of the historical event or the historical personality the narrative represents.

Considering Alice Munro, she has managed to recast and represent history in her work through her investigative work represented materialistic explanations of historical phenomenon portraying the history of human organizations and their function. With respect to her book *The View from Castle Rock*, Alice Munro stated in her interview at Edinburgh International Book Festival with Margaret Atwood.

> Well, it’s quite different in that I use real people—my ancestors—and I use letters that were written by real people, as you have just heard. I’ve never done this before. It’s a very queer mixture of fiction and non-fiction, because while I’m using these real people and quoting their words, I’m also making up things that they might have said, implying that I know something about their character (Atwood: 2007).

The stories that belong to this collection do contribute a realistic picture. Alice Munro excels in her skill to mix images of reality and imagination. This realism in her stories draw our attention as it depicts a social setting that is very true to its picture.

*The View from Castle Rock* (2006) is Alice Munro’s twelfth volume in a career that has spanned for almost fifty-five years winning her an international acclaim. Munro, according to Mona Simpson, “understands reality in a complex, capacious way, leaving intact its dimensions of dream and wonder, its shadings of the fantastic.” The view from Castle Rock is almost her autobiographical essay. Munro
descended from a family of shepherds named Laidlaw, who belonged to the Ettrick valley. Shulevitz in her article The Anatomy of Destiny Alice Munro, spinner of fates writes:-,

In *The View From Castle Rock*, a series of stories that takes us through seven generations of Munro's family's history and culminates in her own, she hasn't written one. These tales, she tells us in the foreword, should not be taken as a memoir, even if in writing them "I was doing something closer to what a memoir does—exploring a life, my own life." She put herself in the center, she continues, "and wrote about that self, as searchingly as I could." But to "the figures around this self"—her ancestors, relatives, friends, and lovers—she granted a freer existence, basing them on fact to some degree (it is not clear how much) but allowing them "their own life and color" and letting them do things "they had not done in reality."

The book is partly based on the stories of her ancestors who live in Scotland and gradually migrate from there to certain places of United States and Canada. It has a lot to do with Scotland which had also undergone an interesting religious phenomenon. Also, allied with this religion, there was education, because reading the Bible was terribly important. This resulted in an educated peasantry, a lower class who could read, and who spent their time in a kind of exploration of what were really theological or philosophical questions. This also was useful as the family got to have a record of the family history as in every generation there was at least one who had the habit of keeping the record of his or her family life.

As the New Historical theory, Tyson explains, is to think about the retelling of history itself: "...questions asked by traditional historians and by new historicists are quite different...traditional historians ask, 'What happened?' and 'What does the event tell us about history?' In contrast, new historicists ask, 'How has the event been interpreted?' and 'What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?'" (Tyson 278). It is the course of events present in the text that depicts a setting. In fact the narrative functions as a workshop representing cultural problems, political issues, debates and emotions. The narrative in the process draws the reader into a creative process where he is invited to experience the event as tends to relive through the events narrated.

It seeks to reconnect a literary work to a period when it represents and identifies it with the cultural, social and political movements of the time (Michel Foucault's - épistème). New Historicism assumes that
every work is a product of the historic moment that created it. The literary text finally is able to convince the reader of the representations it carries by providing evidence and allowing us to discover the authentic world that is represented.

For instance, Will O’Phaup (William Laidlaw) represented in the narrative, happens to be the grandfather of James Hogg popularly known as ‘the Ettrick shepherd’, in the Scottish literary circle. In fact, the epitaphs which have been quoted in the book can be seen in Head stones where Hogg, his grandfather and Thomas Boston (the Anglican priest) are buried.

Hogg's mother, Margaret, as Munro points out, was a Laidlaw. Margret Laidlaw Hogg was famous locally for the number of verses she carried in her head. Munro quotes in her narrative No Advantages, that when Margret was given the book produced by Walter Scott; who included her contribution to the work in 1802 she made a fuss about aspects of the book. The narrative traces the oral tradition of storytelling and songs being sung without being recorded. Hogg too used his mother’s oral narratives as sources. The narrative in itself brings out the underlying mythologies and oral traditions that co-existed in Scotland. These in turn become an evidence that asserts Derrida’s view of the ‘anteriority of writing to speech (Hamilton 2002: 128)’, thus emphasizing postmodern ideas.

In Lindsay’s historical work The History of Scottish Literature, he mentions Hogg’s mother was the supplier of the sources which served as the foreground for Hogg to pen his ballades. Each of these ballads bears a striking resemblance to the mythical narrations of Will O’Phaup, which Munro says were narrated by Will to entertain his people. As we tend to go deeply into creative matrices of a particular historical culture and get to understand how certain products of these cultures seem to possess certain independence, the writers’ description of the events and characters gradually begin to diminish when the central context of the story seems to shift to something outside the text. Embedded in these stories is a great amount of social realities that has lead to the multicultural society of Canada.

**The historical significance of : The Men of Ettrick:**

**Age of Will O’Phaup – A record of political importance of Scottish History:**
Alice Munro during her visit to Scotland says that she happened to stumbled upon the grave of William Laidlaw, to whom she refers in the story as O’Phaup (Phaup – a local version of Far-Hope). He was called so, after he had settled down in an abandoned farm called O’Phaup. He was believed to be the last person in Scotland to have spoken to the Fairies. He was not the native of the Ettrick valley and searching records, the author assumes that he may have settled there by chance. He could have been a teen aged lad who had walked over the hills in search of a job. From the inscriptions on the grave, Munro writes in her literary text: he had been born in 1695, when Scotland was still a separate country, though it shared a monarch with England. He would have been twelve years old at the time of the controversial Union, and a young man by the time of the bitter failed Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, a man deep into middle age by the time of Culloden (Munro, 8).

The categorization of Will’s age, which Munro mentions in the narrative also have a historical significance. In 1603, James VI, King of Scots inherited the throne of the Kingdom of England, and became King James I of England, and left Edinburgh for London. After the Glorious Revolution, the abolition of episcopacy and the overthrow of the Roman Catholic James VII by William and Mary, Scotland briefly threatened to select a different Protestant monarch from England. The narrative marks the political significance of this period during which Will was born and when Scotland was ruled by a single monarch. ‘He would have been twelve at the time of the controversial Union (Munro 8)’, the narrative makes us turn pages to realize that the implication is towards the Treaty of Union of 22 July 1706 that was agreed between representatives of the Scots Parliament and the Parliament of England. The treaty of the Union was a name given to the agreement that lead to the creation of the Kingdom of Great Britain. This political union of England and Scotland became effective in the year 1707. This was the year in which Will was twelve year old. This year is shown with marked significance as the previous attempts to unite the two countries had failed in 1606, 1667 and 1689 and was not favored by the Scottish people.

The next political event of importance that is mentioned happens to the major Jacobite risings launched in 1715 and 1745 failed to remove the House of Hanover from the British throne. Will Laidlaw was a young man during this period. Now the Jacobite Risings were a series of uprisings, rebellions, and wars in the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland occurring between 1688 and 1746. The uprisings were
aimed at returning James VII of Scotland and James II of England. The primary seats of Jacobinism were Ireland and Scotland, particularly the Scottish Highlands.

The narrative marks that Will was a man who was into his middle age during, The Battle of Culloden which took place on 16 April 1746. It was the final clash between the French-supported Jacobites and the Hanoverian British Government in the 1745 Jacobite Rising. Charles Edward of the house Stuart raised forces, mainly of Scottish Highlands and defeated the Hanoverian Army stationed in Scotland at the Battle of Prestonpans. The Scottish population had remained hostile to the rebels and it was only after a lengthy wait, that Charles Stuart persuaded his generals that English Jacobites would stage an uprising in support of his cause. He was convinced that France would launch an invasion of England as well. His army of around 5,000 invaded England on 8 November 1745. The Jacobites met only token resistance. There was, however, little support from English Jacobites, and the French invasion fleet was still being assembled. On 6 December 1745, they withdrew, with Charles Edward Stuart petulantly leaving command to Murray—a decisive defeat. It was the last battle ever to be fought on British soil.

These years and dates and their political importance only present a reference to the political change in Scotland. These are in no way significant to Will who was never affected by the political changes. His world was remote filled with his own achievements and his experience with the supernatural and the mythical stories which he told were important to him. He belonged to the local wonders of the place. The narrative in fact, a historical explanation with a combination of the literary form to represent culture, religious beliefs of people, political situations of people through a period of time.

**The historical significance of Thomas Boston:**

Munro in *No advantages* spends some pages on the life of the Reverend Thomas Boston, minister in the valley at the time James Laidlaw. In 1707, Boston was transferred to the parish of Ettrick, where he found the people sadly divided by separatism. But when, in 1716, he received a call to Closeburn, his people at Ettrick showed the utmost anxiety at the prospect of losing their minister. It was during his Ettrick ministry that his *Fourfold State* was first published, and by it his ministry was extended far and wide. But the doctrinal content of those discourses had been greatly influenced by his discovery, in a
humble home in Simprin, of Edward Fisher’s treatise The Marrow of Modern Divinity. Munro in the narrative expresses her surprise about the fact that her ancestor- Will O’Phaup who was almost a pagan to have listened to the minstrels of, Thomas Boston every Sunday.

My ancestor, a near pagan, a merry man, a brandy drinker, one upon whom wagers are set, a man who believes in the fairies, is bound to have listened to, and believed in, the strictures and hard hopes of this punishing Calvinist faith (Munro 17).

James Laidlaw:

James Hogg, son of Will’s eldest daughter Margaret Laidlaw and James Laidlaw were cousins. In one of his writings Hogg writes that his cousin was a man with an amusing character. He seemed interested in science, religion and politics. It was this grandson of Will O’Phaup who set out to seek his fortune in America actually Canada, when he was almost sixty years of age.

James Laidlaw and his children emigrated during the period where a number of immigrants migrated from Britain and Ireland, encouraged to settle in Canada after the War of 1812, settling in what happens to be present-day Ontario. The authenticity of these details is evident in Sheila’s ‘Lives of Mothers and Daughters’, where she provides supporting evidence that Munro was actually a descendent of the family represented.

Earlier I had been looking through the photograph of my Laidlaw ancestors that lie buried in an old trunk in the upstairs of my mother’s house in Clinton; one of the trunks came out from Victoria. I came across one I’d never seen before, a Victorian portrait of a man and his wife…my mother’s great-grandparents, Thomas Laidlaw and Margaret Armour. (124)

Back in Scotland as observed by Munro- Hogg became famous through his writing. Munro believes that Hogg published some of these incidents and stories that took place during these meetings in the Backwoods magazine.

The diary of young Walter Laidlaw, James's son, lends quotations. The archives offered her plenty of stuff to incorporate and supplement, including items unfamiliar to me as a biographer
of Hogg. The high house of Phaup, up in the hills above Ettrick, near the burial place of Hogg's sinner, is identified - correctly, I think - as the place where Hogg's shepherd friends met for debates (Miller 2006).

James Hogg’s privileged movement between the old ways of the valley and the modernity of Edinburgh’s literary culture mirrors the way Munro has always positioned herself, mediating the old-fashioned rural Canada she grew up in for a sophisticated cosmopolitan readership. Later on tracing the descendants of James Laidlaw; Munro got to know that Mary his daughter and Robert, James, Andrew, William and Walter were the five sons Laidlaw was proud about. William the second last boy happened to be her great-great grandfather.

**Hogg in Scottish History:**

In, *The History of Scottish literature*, James Hogg was politically important from (1770-1835), popularly known as the ‘Ettrick Shepherd’. It can be noted from the history that,

His mother possessed an inexhaustible stock of ballades and folklore, which she imparted to her son. His sheep knowledge was put to good use in his text book, *The Shepherd’s Guide: being a practical treatise on the diseases of sheep* (1807), a work that was to prove of service to hill farmers for several decades. His folk-lore, mixed up with fashionable culture of the day which he strove to acquire by self education, was to provide him with the raw material for a considerable if uneven crop of novels, stories and poems (Lindsay 284).

History also gives us details of Hogg’s first publications that came about during 1801 on his visit to Edinburgh. Some of his first original works to be published were *Scottish Pastorals, Poems and Songs*, which was followed by *The Mountain Bard* (1807). Within a short period Hogg set out to settle in Edinburgh in 1810, the year in which *The Forest Minstrel* appeared. In 1813 he won a place on the Blackwood’s staff, this also earned him the friendship of Wordsworth and Byron. *The Jacobite Relics of Scotland* (first series in 1819 and second series in 1821), are works by which Hogg is well known to this day. The narrative presents itself in a circular manner, pointing out reoccurrences of incidents that repeat themselves in the past as well as the present. For this we would have to change the manner of our approach as we try to interpret the message the historical writing conveys. The narrative reveals the hidden past. Opening for the reader
Cultural Representations in Alice Munro’s Short Story

the complex historical scenario, embedded in the narrative. It conveys truth about the political and social occurrences of a period.

The effect is a highlighted sense of parody of the past by the present which attempts to dress itself up in borrowed historical clothing (Hamilton 90).

As a child growing up in Huron County in Ontario, Munro heard lots of stories and each in different versions about the feats achieved by this simple-hearted fellow who was never interested in rewards. This is identical to what she hears of, Will O’Phaup at his earliest job with Mr. Anderson. A connection in which Munro tries to establish between the past and the present by tracing her ancestral roots, leads her to discover her connection with Will O Phaup and James Hogg.

…the reader is establishing these interrelations between past, present and future, actually causes the text to reveal its potential multiplicity of connections. These connections are the product of the reader’s mind working on the raw material of the text, though they are not the text itself –for it consists of just sentences, statements, information, etc. (Lodge, 192)

New Historicism, gives raise to questions about originality in art, the status of ‘genius’ as the explanatory term. There are unacknowledged traces of myths in the works of Munro. In fact the narrative stands as strong evidence of the myths and fairytales of the land. In one of the adventures narrated by Alice Munro, there was once a time when Will O’ Phaup witnessed a whole company of creatures all about the height of two year old-children all dressed up in green and dainty looking busy in their chores. And all the while they seemed to be chattering and humming something familiar, which he later realized to be his name. ‘And it comes clearer and clearer –the little chirp- chirp song they make. Finally it comes clear as a bell. Will O’Phaup, Will O’Phaup, Will O’ Phaup. His own name is all the word in their mouths. (Munro 11)’. In fear he runs home and prays throughout the night with his children gathered close to him.

A history of Scotland reveals that the earliest inhabitants were members of Celtic racial group from the North-Western parts of Europe. As the countries would have it these invaders were people, of whom we lose track in history books, but meeting them probably in the stories and legends. The Celtic folk-lore happens to be rich in stories; of strange secret people dwelling in remote parts of the country and shunning daylight. These small, dark folk, brownies, elves, fairy folk,
are probably the unassimilated survivors of the pre-Celtic peoples. Something that Will Laidlaw represents. Again true to the record we get to know more of him only through the works of his grandson James Hogg.

New Historicisms brings out an understanding of historical conditions. This narrative in particular reminds me of Derridas’ concept of the importance of oral and written tradition. Both Hogg and Margret represent the culture of the oral tradition of storytelling and narrative ballades which Hogg has recorded through his writings. The conflict between the oral and the written form is at the same time expressed in the narrative through the displeasure which Margret expresses. But indeed it only through these records that we do understand the existence of the oral tradition, which have served as a source for Scott’s and Hogg’s written work. It is also evident that these records of what Hogg has made in his work have been the source for Munro’s narrative. It is this finding that brings out the desire to explore the background which acts as a motivation for the story. As it is important to know the causality, that led to the creation of the narrative. It is the course of events present in the text that depicts a setting.

We have made attempts to obtain the extratextual material like historical records, religious beliefs, oral traditions, social documents, pieces of classical literature, information from encyclopedia, biographies, articles from journals and news papers. Documents which would help us prove the authenticity of the representations. These materials serve a parallel text to support the ideas in the literary text. These bits of cultural representations, though not a part of the larger context, may be the very source, for the formation of the work. In a very important way the New Historicists reading serves like a crossroad where a literary work meets interpretative methods from the other academic disciplines like sociology, history and anthropology.

Bibliography


"It was a combination of the confined space and assurance of anonymity as they were strangers to each other that turned the coupe into a confessional box. Their candour, their subversiveness, their subtle strength and courage inspired Ladies Coupe."

Are you allowed to live your own life? If you ask this question to an Indian woman, the definite answer will be a strong 'No'. Indian women are constrained to the roles of a daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother etc. India's latest celebrity, Anita Nair explores this theme in her novel 'Ladies Coupe'.

Postcolonial feminist literature has always carried the heavy burden of dealing with, not to say unraveling, layers of misinterpretation of traditions and religions. At the center of this dilemma is the role of women and her (in) dependence, economically and socially. The more traditional a postcolonial society is, more problematic the question of women’s emancipation is, and, therefore, the more passionate its women writers are.

No wonder, then, that Anita Nair’s engrossing ‘Ladies Coupe’ raises what many readers might consider ‘taboo’ questions about the role of women in contemporary postcolonial India. Nair’s India suffers from a system of sex-role stereotyping and oppression of women that exist under patriarchal social organization. Of course, patriarchy, in its different forms, has tried in many ways to repress, debase and humiliate women—especially through the images represented in cultural and traditional forms.’ Ladies Coupe’ deals with such issues by asking fundamental questions that not only shake the ideological ground of man’s patriarchal role in a traditional society, but also imply the existence of an alternative reality. Put differently, the novel questions whether the role of Indian women—as a representative of other women living under oppressive patriarchal systems—in relation to culture resistance should be restricted only to their roles as wives and mothers. In such a world, woman’s role is limited to reproduction regardless of her own desires and needs.

As the title of the novel indicates the plot is in a Ladies Coupe where five women, who meet for the first time in their lives share their
life's experience. Even though they differ in age, educational backgrounds and cultural upbringings; the stories have a common thread - an Indian woman's life is dominated by a man in one way or another. Anita Nair feels strongly and deeply about corruption of pure traditions and art to give them popular appeal. "Don't dilute an art form; instead cherish and nurture it."\(^2\)

Nair places major emphasis on examining women's lives and their psyche within the context of south Indian family, representing women in their traditional roles as mothers, wives and daughters. She has an intense emotional understanding of human motivations and a sharp, flexible intelligence. 'Ladies Coupe' is an explicit visual description of feminine psyche and the vehemence of passions it produces. Through the intimate conversation among the women in the 'Ladies Coupe', a chunk of society of all socio-economical levels and age groups is portrayed. It is a demonstration of the keen attention to details with which she illuminates the lives of her characters in a clear, simple and descriptive writing style, with sympathy and knowledge. Her characters do not postulate themselves as absolutes, to be acclaimed or abandoned, rather inspire us to look honestly at ourselves, our passions and our actions in family relationships and society.

The novel has more than twelve characters apart from the central character Akhila and her five co-passengers; yet all are used by the writer to the conducting of the main design to perfection. Like a skillful chess player, slowly, she draws out her characters and makes them pawn of use to her central character in a significant way. Each one is chosen for a specific facet to be projected, each excelling the other and having a precise function in exerting a profound influence on Akhila's decision to marry or stay single at the age of forty-five.

The Brahmin heroine, Akhila, whose life has been taken out of her control is a 45-year-old “spinsters”, daughter, sister, aunt and the only provider of her family after the death of her father. Getting fed up with these multiple roles, she decides to go on a train journey away from the family and responsibilities, a journey that will ultimately make her a different woman.

"So this then is Akhila, . Forty –five years old. Sans rose- coloured spectacles. Sans husband, children, home, and family.... Dreaming of escape and space. Hungry for life and experience. Aching to content.”

In the all- female Ladies Coupe she meets five other women each of whom has a story to tell. The stories are all an attempt to answer
Akhila’s question: - can a woman stay single and be happy at the same time.

Anita Nair shows how the conservative and orthodox Amma, a devoted wife with her own theory. A wife is always inferior to the husband. It is so much easier and simpler said to accept one's station of life and live accordingly. To overcome the crisis of early widowhood, in her own way was an uphill task for Amma. She lets her eldest daughter Akhila take over the responsibilities and turn a work horse to become the provider. Turning a blind eye to Akhila's needs the entire family of mother and children take advantage of her sense of duty to keep them safe and secure. In a similar situation there is a complete contrast in the portrayal of Sarasa Mami's family as Jaya turns a prostitute to feed her family. The moral dilemmas of women trapped in social and emotional circumstances, struggling against oppression and a hostile fate and the human nature in terms of conflict are very well interpreted.

Akhila feels trapped in a confining Hindu Brahmin society but never displays open rebellion even when her younger siblings get married. This sense of being trapped, imprisoned and isolated is caused, from the psychological point of view, only by the fact that she never tells her mother or family members anything about her hopes, plans, sorrows, and needs. But her friendship with Katherine has an everlasting effect on her. She takes her first step, towards breaking the restraints imposed on her, by tasting an egg. She gets her mother accept and endure, her taste for eggs.

Yet, analytically, especially when we look at the age and sex-based inequalities within the two forms of social and economic organizations, we find that the two are not very different whether within the household or within the family. Both in terms of allocation of social powers and in the allocation of physical items, women are always lower in the hierarchy. Further if sometimes they do have positions of social power within the family due to age or custom or what are called the rules of conduct, this is certainly not associated with economic power, namely control over resources, incomes and their distribution.

Thus, it could be said that it is more often the case that the household more than the family contains or conceals within it gender-based inequalities. It is also often suggested that this inequality strides across the usual barriers of stratification such as class, caste, race and religion. “It is even suggested that while in a highly stratified society
like India it is difficult to justify gender as a basis of social and political formation, as gender to is driven by class, caste and religion based distances, if conceptually we move away from ‘inter-household’ distances to ‘intra-household’ analysis it is possible to find the basis for such formations. In other words, whereas clustering by class or caste is done on the basis of ‘units of household’ clusters: clustering’s on the basis of gender could be derived from the intra-household characterization, “units of individual.” By emphasizing individual autonomy, perhaps women would provide a strategy for all that is women, men and children. In other words, women’s choices of alternative paths to progress would establish opportunities for all.

Thus, women from within households have the common experience of facing different forms of intra-household subordination whatever the class or caste, and this common experience within this world of the household could not only provide the basis of organization but also provide perspectives which could be called Feminism, or the method and articulation of women.

The realistic picture of the humble and often miserable lives of the peasantry women, the destination and injustice in villages is presented through Mariokolanthu, whose innocence was destroyed by one night of lust. In Mari's life we find ample material for wonder, terror and transport, some incidents even cause aversion and disbelief. In the sad, toilsome, exploited life of Mari, Anita Nair exposes the practical motives which govern humans bringing a touch of blunt honesty to the otherwise uncomplicated life story of comfortable women. In an era when it is alright to express on self frankly, the sensitive issue of homo sexuality is bound to come. The issue still being in its nascent stage in this country the writer deals with it gracefully. Mari's encounter with the two lesbian English doctor influences her expression of devotion to Sujatha. Anita Nair has molded her thoughts into easy and significant words without any superfluities of expression. In spite of all the turmoil’s and horrors she experienced, thirty one year old Mari, a maid servant and a helper, ultimately wrests control of her destiny and seeks measure of happiness for herself and her thirteen year old son Muthur whose existence she has ignored until now.

Pampered by her loving husband, Janaki Devi has no reason to complain. This elderly fragile lady "whose relationship with her husband is a friendly love," complains that she felt deprived of a chance to exhibit her strength because of this very over protectiveness and hated him for that reason. At the allusion to her age as certain age,
she wonders if men don't have the problems of certain age. Janaki's reflective anecdote reveals the feminine fancy of extraordinary sensitivity, Siddarth, her son insults her calling her as self-centered. This realisation dawns upon her and her expression of discontent vanishes. She suggests to Akhila that our life is not programmed for loneliness.

It is fourteen years old Sheela who proves more capable and sensitive to her Ammumma's feelings than any other grown up member of the family. We have a complete picture of a middle class South Indian family, their attitude, when gathered during the last days of an old sick parent. Nair shows how a child is a powerful sensitive tape that can register, record and pick the feeblest vibrations and note those details that escape elders because their senses have calcified or selfishness dominates. Anita Nair has delicately brought up the issue of child abuse when Sheela wonders why one of the friends father behaves the way he does, touching her and why Ammumma forbade her going there.

Margaret, the chemistry teacher, who succeeds in disciplining her narcissistic husband / principal, by making him fat she erodes his self esteem and feels he is an easy man to live with now, in and out of health institute. Margaret gains self-esteem by eroding Ebe's self-esteem. Prabha the rich submissive wife loves swimming, because it metaphorically gives her a sense of achievement. She corrects herself in time to preserve order and bliss in the confines of her home. None of the women's weaknesses escape Anita Nair, yet she displays a very real respect for them.

What comes under speculative pressure in Nair's novel is the opposition between ideological appearance represented in a mythic and metaphysical understanding of the material world and the reality represented in the material oppression of women of low caste and their sexuality. 'Ladies Coupe' deconstructs that which is taken for granted: the sacred, the traditional, and the ideological. Akhila is not given the opportunity by her family to get married and have a family, as "traditions" dictate; she is rather expected to provide. Brahmin's traditions, in this case, become flexible, but Akhila is still called a "spinster? Marikolanthu gets raped and, unsurprisingly, she is to blame: "Why does a young woman walk alone?"

By narrating the stories of these six women, Nair moves them from a state of passivity and absence into a state of active presence, from the kitchen and the bedroom to the street and the world at large. These are
the stories, which together make a single story, of women re-
discovering their bodies. The Coupe becomes a metaphor for a utopian
world that is liberated from patriarchy, one that is not characterized by
false binaries. Hence the conscious action taken by Akhila at the end of
the novel, an action that aims to overcome the contradictions that are
characteristic of the "traditional" world and its essential determinant:
that is alienation. This train journey is a search for secret self and ends
in self discovery and more radically with self assertion.

“The novel is about making choices and living life on one’s own
terms. It is the strength and resilience of the everyday woman that Nair
brings out as a writer. Nair’s women are fleshed out to the last detail’
You can visualize them clearly- their faces, their bones, their desires-
as they talk animatedly in the train discussing their lives.”

Anita Nair’s feminism clears the misconception that feminism is an
anti- marriage, anti- family and anti- men movement imported from the
west. It is the creative expression to the complex emotional states that
characterize the basic dilemma of modern Indian women.

References
CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS IN TRANSLATING KASHINATH SINGH’S APNA MORCHA (OUR FRONT)

Rajni Dwivedi

Translation is a form of literary activity which carries ideas, meanings contained in one language into another without violating the basic theme of the source language. It is a way of reading, interpreting, criticizing and in the same process creating a new text for those who have no access to literature in alien language system. Writers like J.C. Catford, Susan Basnett, Popovic, Vladimir Ivir and Hans J. Vermer have given their own definition of translation.

J.C. Catford in his book *A Linguistic theory of Translation* says 'Translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another…' Susan Bassnett-Mcguire in his book *Translation Studies* observes that:

Translation involves far more than replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages and as can be seen in the translation of idioms and metaphors, the process may involve discarding the basic linguistic elements of the SL text so as to achieve Popovic's goal of 'expressive identity' between the SL and TL texts. But once the translator moves away from the close linguistic equivalence, the problems of determining the exact nature of the level of equivalence aimed for begin to emerge. Hans J. Vermer in his article "What does it mean to translate?" says that 'we all translate by intuition' that is, to say that a process of translation is not governed by strict rules. Vladimir Ivir in his paper "Procedures and strategies for translation of culture" writes translation as an event involves inter-cultural and cross cultural factors:

‘Translation is a way of establishing contacts between cultures. The transference- in its literal, etymological meaning of the linguistic expression is precisely an attempt to integrate elements of one culture into another. Translating means translating cultures, not languages.’ Popovic in his paper "Translation as communication" establishes that 'a translation is always a metatext or a text about a text' because the way it chooses to differ from the source text is indicative of target text's conception of the source text, in particular, and of textuality, in general. According to this view addition, deletions, substitutions and
recording of information by a target text considers needing elaboration, on what it cannot accept in a different form.

Thus, one can say that translation involves a complex process of understanding and analysing the message in the source language as received by the translator. This is followed by decodification of the codified-message. Then the translator recodifies it in target linguistic system. Translation can be of different types like literal translation, transcreation, semantic translation and free translation.

In the context of Indian literature, Aijaz Ahmed in his essay "Languages of class, Ideologies of immigration" has described the importance of English and its gaining of national status. According to him, India having different languages spoken in different states is a fragmented nation. So, it needed a language which could have proved as a unifying factor that is English. English was brought in India by Britishers that is colonizers. It was regarded as master's language and an official language. After the fifty years of India's independence, English still enjoys the same status as it was in colonial period. It still has its hegemony on the decolonized citizens of India. And now the Indians have appropriated the language of their rulers so extensively that Indian Literature written in different languages are being translated into English in order to project the genuine and authentic image of India to the outside world, as a process of resurrection of bruised national pride. Derrida’s theory of deconstruction subverts the relationship between centre and margin. As per the concept of difference, the centre is no longer the centre. So, New Literatures deserves attention not only in vernacular language but also in English, so that the readers of English language can understand the richness of the vernacular cultural ethos, its language and its gaining significance. The need and importance of English Language is also recognized by Harish Trivedi in his essay "Reorientation- A Post-Colonial Agenda" and gives the concept of Panchdhatu 'and its objective would be not to abandon English Literature altogether,… but to plant it in native ground and to give it a surrounding context which will help us to revalidate it and appropriate it in our own terms.' Among the five elements of Panchdhatu, the third element- 'Literature not originally written in English but made available in English translation from various languages of the world,' is suitable in the post-colonial period. The continuous use of English in everyday life and in every field established it firmly as a cultural link between the colonial and post-
Cultural and Linguistic Problems in Translating....

colonial phase. Although, Hindi is the first language that is the national language in India, but being a multilingual country there are citizens who are unable to understand or speak Hindi. They are either familiar with their own state languages like Bengali, Punjabi or English (the official language or the master's language). So for the readership of such citizens or the people around the world who do not know Hindi, Kashinath Singh's *Apna Morcha* is translated in English. English being a widely spoken language is perhaps the best mechanism to portray the life of the postcolonial time. The translation of *Apna Morcha* will help the English Speakers to understand the perspective of the Indian youth, when a question of language becomes a political and social issue capable of giving rise to several movements. The novel emphasises the meaninglessness of life and gives an insight into how different people look differently to the questions of life and how they are brought under by the social system. Its translation will lead the readers to search their own self and apply their wisdom to find the correct answers to such questions as posed by the writer. The prime purpose of translation is to place Kashinath Singh's concerned feeling and thoughts in totality in proper perspective for its target readers (English speaking readers).

Kashinath Singh's *Apna Morcha* has been closely translated that is the literal translation but at few places where proverbs or idioms, if literally translated becomes ridiculous so to avoid the awkwardness it has been semantically translated. While making a close translation of the text some other techniques like borrowing, defining the elements of culture, substitution are also used.

Borrowing means the importation of the source language expression to the target language. It is the commonest method of cultural transference, spread of influence from one culture to another. For instance the Indian delicacies like puri, masala-dosa, bati-chokha etc. has been borrowed from Hindi. And these elements of culture are defined so that the members of target culture are aware of what they do not know. The borrowed items are explained in the glossary at the end of the translation. Substitution is available in the cases in which the two cultures display a partial overlap rather than a clear-cut 'presence vs. absence' of particular elements of culture. The target language offers a natural expression for its own cultural element that happens to partly coincide with the source-culture element. For example- The Vice-Chancellor, The Head of the Department. In Hindi often the words are repeated twice to lay more emphasis, so while translating
these words they are translated only once for example 'Dheeray-dheeray' is translated as 'slowly', 'Unchi-unchi' as 'high'. Therefore the repeated words are omitted.

While translating Kashinath Singh's *Apna Morcha* there are many cultural and linguistics problems. The greatest problem is that of sustaining the right mood, tone, purpose, feeling and sense of Kashinath Singh's writing, and finding the equivalence between Hindi language and English language.

All the languages have their own grammatical and syntactical peculiarities and limitations. Hindi language uses only one word 'kal' to denote both 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', and its laws of grammar, its use of gender and pronoun in particular are totally different from that of English. In Hindi, words like 'tu', 'tum' and 'aap' are used with the degree of intimacy and respect for a person but in English there is no equivalent for these words, only 'you' is used for them. A westerner hails his country as fatherland but in India it is called as motherland. In the translated text the Indian land is dented as 'she' (a female). Finding the equivalent terms for items of dress, or proverbs is the toughest task. The English expression 'ankle length apparel' or 'shirt' cannot correctly describe Hindi words like 'dhoti' or 'kurta'. If 'gamcha' is translated as 'handkerchief' the description is rather odd. The non-Indian English reader may wonder how one wears a handkerchief. So the names of dresses are retained in their native form, as the translation of these words lead to the artificiality of the text, but these words are explained in the glossary. These culture specific words pose a good deal of problems in translation. English is an SVO (Subject, Verb, Object) language but Hindi is an SOV (Subject, Object, Verb) language. In the translation of the text *Apna Morcha*, the SOV form of sentence in Hindi language is changed into SVO, so that the sentence becomes meaningful.

Another area which presents insurmountable problems in translating the text is that of idioms and proverbs which are produced by a particular culture. An attempt is made to approximate the terms of the idiom so as to maintain the peculiar quality of language. But if the original idiom is not maintained properly, then the translated idiom appears funny and awkward. Hindi proverb *'Dant chiyare parti khet'* has nothing to do with land. It has been translated in English as 'giggling teeth', is not a literal translation but a semantic and cultural translation. If the Hindi proverb *'Pet par lat marna'* is translated as 'to
kick the stomach' will be a mockery, so it is translated as 'to destroy the livelihood'. The semantic equivalent is established. There are other examples also in the text.

The presence of rhythm, rhyme, assonance etc and the evocative use of language makes the translation of songs more challenging. The song 'Din ho ya raat/ tanik nahi chaina/ kisi se na kahena' is translated in English as 'Day or night/ There is no respite/ Don't tell it to anyone'.

Thus, there are certain special problems in translating Kashinath Singh's _Apna Morcha_ because of both the nature of Hindi and Kashinath's style. Particular elements of the structure of language are fairly distinctive. For example the standard of Hindi especially as spoken by village people is too elliptical and abbreviated statement. Kashinath Singh's characters speak in highly metaphorical language full of abuses, proverbial phrases and elaborated images. Many of these would be unintelligible if simply 'translated', a suitable equivalent has been found for them. Kashinath Singh writes in Hindi but also incorporates Urdu words and different dialects of Hindi (like Bhojpuri and Avadhi) words like Babua and Babui has been retained in the translated text. Therefore the inadequacy of literal translation is beautifully expressed in an Italian proverb 'Tradulitore Traditore' which means 'A translator is a traitor'. Translation is said to be a kind of disguised commentary. It involves the process of judgement where 'objectivity' is almost impossible. Maria Tymoczko in her article "Post-colonial writing and literal translation" has rightly stated that 'just as there can be no final translation, there can be no final interpretation of a culture through a literary mode' (qtd. in Tiwari 11).

**Works cited**


References
RELIGIOUS FANATICISM IN GITHA HARIHARAN’S IN
TIMES OF SIEGE

Sandhya Singh

Fanaticism is a belief or behaviour involving critical zeal, particularly for an extreme religious or political cause. Religious fanaticism is related to a person’s or a group’s unreasoning devotion to a religion. Religious fanatics do not use any rational thought. They tend to pick only those chapters and verses from their holy book which support their own prejudices. They are averse to science and logic. They preach love but their driving force is hate – hatred for others and their faiths. Fanatics are, in fact, responsible for most of the evils in the world.

Githa Hariharan who shot into prominence with her Commonwealth Prize winning novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, is one of the leading Indian novelists writing in English. Hariharan’s fourth novel *In Times of Siege* takes up a contemporary situation, focusing on a middle-aged Professor of History in an Open University in New Delhi. Passionately committed to his subject, Prof. Murthy spends his time researching and writing History lessons which are then mailed to students enrolled in the distance education course.

His life straddles two different worlds: one, the subject he specialises in – the glorious past of the Vijayanagar Empire, and two, non-descript present in which he lives a routine academic life. Other individuals peopling his world are his wife Rekha who, at present, is in America helping their software employed daughter settle into her new job, and the maid servant Kamla with her husband and daughter. At the Open University where he is in-charge of B.A. History programme, his colleagues are the usual set of academics – the non-descript timid head, Mr. Lal, the quiet Menon, the secretary Mrs. Khan, the fundamentalist Arya and the kurta-clad, cigarette-smoking Amita Sen.

Two sudden events unsettle Murthy’s settled life. The first occurs when Meena, daughter of an old friend of Murthy’s, breaks her leg and asks him if she can move into his house to recuperate. Long ago Shiv had agreed to be her local guardian. As Meena comes out of the hostel supported by two other girls, Shiv has a prophetic feeling that life henceforward is not going to be the same for him: “Shiv will always remember this image: three girls, a stranger on either side of Meena, a
look in their unblinking eyes that makes him hesitate— as if he is on the brink of something, something that cannot be undone” (6).

In nursing Meena Shiv is helped by Kamla and her daughter Babli. All tender feelings in Shiv surface while tending and caring for this practical, no-nonsense girl Meena. The inevitable physical contact, exchange of glances and sharing of his views with her, kindle love in Shiv. The world-view of Meena, a woman of the younger generation is being shaped by radical texts such as *The Politics of Hate*, *Onward United Action*, *Women’s Voices* and *The Communalist Agenda*. She is also a fan of Asterix and the Normans and Tintin. She likes to champion political cause through posters campaigns, sit-ins and demonstrations. Once she says to Shiv, “If only it had been at a rally or something. You know, if it had been the fault of the police, breaking a leg would have been of some use” (13). She further says, “Look, I know you plan to call my parents. I’d rather you didn’t. That you didn’t worry them. I’ll be all right here. You don’t mind, do you?” (13-14). Shiv is completely unprepared for this. But she is waiting for him to decide, holding back eagerness and anxiety. The worldly-wise smile and all other hints of shrewdness have left her face. He advises her: “Of course, if you want to stay here … I think we should speak to your parents, you would be more comfortable with your mother here. Kamla can be quite elusive if Rekha is not here. But let’s see. Let’s see how it goes for a few days” (14).

Pat comes her response, “I don’t need Kamla, she’s too slow and clumsy. But you’re here, aren’t you? Since you don’t have to meet your students, can’t you bring your work home? I mean— if you don’t mind?” (14).

The intrusion of this young, politically conscious Meena, with her entourage of friends and comrades into the placid, humdrum life of Murthy’s, opens a whole new world before him. While he is still adjusting to his new situation, the second event is triggered off by a lesson he had written on an ancient reformer poet Basavanna, the legendary 12th century figure of the Vijayanagar Empire. Veerashaivism, the movement he founded, ran strong for some time and then it floundered. Basava campaigned for citizen equality and called for the end of caste system: Basava and many of his followers took on the caste system, the iron net that held society so firmly in place; that reduced the common man and woman to hopeless captives. Thousands of these ‘ordinary’ men
and women took part in Basava’s egalitarian dream. The dream spread and took hold of people who had not been people before in Kalyana, people who had just been their functions: the makers of mirrors, the skinners of dead animals, the bearers of children. The people became a movement; movement swelled and surged, a wave that threatened to swallow social conventions and religious rituals, staple diet of tradition.

Such History lessons based on controversial figures apparently don’t go down well with contemporary protectors of India’s history or Hindu fundoos. Murthy’s lesson arouses the ire of the fundoos who clamour for his blood because he has allegedly misrepresented the great Hindu poet, and not given due credit to the glories of the past heritage. In other words, he is accused of distorting heroic historical figures. The fundoos also claim that he has hurt the religious sentiments of a certain sect of people. The head of the History department exhorts Shiv:

It seems you have implied that Basavanna’s city, Kalyana, was not a model Hindu kingdom. It seems you have exaggerated the problem of caste and written in a very biased way about the Brahmins and temple priests. And also you have not made it clear enough that Basavanna was much more than an ordinary human being. These are people who consider him divine, you know.

The louts of ‘Itihas Suraksha Manch’ have belatedly discovered that the saintly Basava has been depicted as human. They wish to have the lesson withdrawn and the Professor humiliated. One day a man who introduces himself as a reporter of a newspaper ‘Current’, telephones Shiv to know whether he is on leave because of the protests against his controversial article on Basavanna or the University has asked him to go on leave. Not knowing what to say, Shiv hangs up on the caller. Meena advises him to find out what it is about as she has a feeling of apprehension that it might be the work of Arya, his colleague and the head of department.

Shiv considers this. He supposes he should call Menon or Amita just in case – this is not some kind of sophisticated crank call. But how would a crank caller know his name? Or that he has written a History lesson for B.A. correspondence students on Basavanna. Suddenly Shiv thinks of Arya. The infighting among faculty members is phenomenal. Faculty members are also divided on grounds of caste, religion and
ideology. There are fundoos among University teachers and Arya is such a one in Shiv’s department:
But over the last year or two, he has been revealing a more aggressive face, unveiling one tantalizing feature at a time. Shiv has heard rumours of the weekly meetings in Arya’s house on campus; he has heard that the guests have been seen leaving the house in khaki gear. Certainly Arya has acquired a new look. His face, once hangdog and apologetic, now seems devoid of flab. Leaner, Meaner (17).

Then the telephone rings. Shiv looks at Meena then picks it up with some trepidation. It is the head and he is not happy at all with this unwanted attention: “You know our policy is to steer clear of controversy”, he reminds Shiv. Shiv is pressurised to retract, apologize, resign and avoid the media. The head says to Shiv:
Well Shiv, we will have to act swiftly to stop this from growing into a controversy. A full apology or retraction from you will be best – we can decide what to call it so that it is not too embarrassing for the department – or for you of course. And we may have to send instructions to all our study centers to discontinue use of the booklet that contains this module. May be we will have to decide to reprint without the lesson. I have to meet the dean tomorrow morning at 11.30 and give him a report. Please meet me before that – wait, I just remembered something else – may be it is best we meet in the dean’s room. And get hold of a copy of the lesson by then if you don’t have one at home (54).

Shiv can do nothing but to agree. He is so bewildered by it all. Meena breaks into his confused thoughts and goes, in her special way, straight to the heart of the matter, “It’s Arya, isn’t it? (55) Shiv says: I don’t know, but some crazy group has got hold of a lesson I wrote for the Medieval History course. As far as I have understood, they are objecting to the fact that I have not made the heroes heroic enough, and that I have made the villains too villainous. At any rate, they claim the lesson distorts history. It seems I have not sung enough of a paean to the glory of Hindu kingdom; and that I make too much of caste divisions among Hindus. The group is called the Itihas Suraksha Manch. The protection of history! Who ever heard of history having to be protected? (55).

“Protect?” says Meena with a knowing sneer. “The minute they use the word you know they mean attack” (55). Shiv considers this for a
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moment. It sounds a little shrill to him, and far too neat, but – it is true that whether people are talking about culture or history or women’s right, protection has become a much abused word – a coverup for all kinds of bullying tactics. But Meena is a step or two ahead of Shiv, “What are you going to say tomorrow? You will have to chalk out a plan. Obviously you can’t apologize or take back a word of the lesson” (55). Shiv’s heart sinks. Is it all so obvious? He feels his eloquence about the complexities of history drying up at the thought of confronting fists, threats, physical danger in any form at all.

Shiv’s moral crisis brings back the memories of his father who disappeared when Shiv was a boy but whose lessons of personal courage still resonate. One man in him wants to hit out, dazzle the head and the dean into submission with Basava’s courage and passion. But even as he recalls Basava’s brave words, the other man in him, the in-charge of B.A. History, Rekha’s predictable husband, strikes back in fear. He argues that he is an academic and not some rabble-rousing activist. He is a Professor after all, and not a two-inch newspaper-column hero. But ‘Basava’s man is ready with his rejoinder: “Why pretend you are a Professor if you cannot stand up to someone telling you what to think? How to think?” (64). Shiv hears the apparently gentle tone, determined to be patient and reasonable, as persuasive as his own father used to be: “Shiv, do you imagine an ordinary man cannot be a hero?” (64).

Next day Shiv goes to the dean’s office where the dean and the head have been talking over cups of tea. There is a cup for Shiv too. Shiv picks up the cup obediently. Then the dean says to Shiv, “I am sorry we had to ask you here while you are on leave. In fact, I am sorry we have to meet about this matter at all. But Professor Sharma must have told you the situation is getting serious” (66). Shiv takes a sip of the cold tea which tastes as foul as it looks. Then he makes his reply exclusively to the dean, ignoring the still nodding head: The lesson is part of the module for the Medieval Indian History paper, which carries three credits. Since the medieval period is my area, I preferred not to commission an outside expert to write the module. Though Basava is so many things, so many people rolled into one – poet and mystic, finance minister and political activist, man of the people and man of god – the lesson itself is quite straightforward. It traces the life of Basava. The growth of his radical ideas and his struggle against caste divisions and the temple establishment, the
tensions that grew between the court and the Brahmins and the merchants on the one hand, and on the other, the low caste artisans and the untouchables who made up a large part of Basava’s Veerashaiva Movement. The lesson ends with the crisis this tension led to, and the dispersal of Basava’s followers; and his own departure from Kalyana and his death shortly after (67).

The dean listens to Shiv with interest, or perhaps a habitual simulation of it. But the head, who is no longer nodding his head, is getting impatient:
Yes we have read the lesson Dr. Murthy. The problem is not the text itself but the implications. What can be read between the lines. I have gone through the lesson carefully and I have made a list of the phrases and sentences that lend themselves to misinterpretation. I am afraid these lapses are what we will now have to explain (67).
Shiv interrupts:
But all this is part of history, drawn from a variety of sources. Part of the challenge of getting to know Basava’s life and times is reconstructing it out of literary texts, legends, inscriptions and other records. The bibliography for the lesson includes all the major sources that have been used for quite some time now by medieval historians (68).

Then the dean asks Dr. Sharma to outline the demands of the Manch. The head tells Shiv that the ‘Itihas Suraksha Manch’ has three demands. First, they want an apology for hurting their sentiments. They want separate apologies from Dr. Murthy and from the department. Second, the lesson should be retracted and the material should be recalled from all students registered for the course, and from study centres and libraries. Third, the rewritten lesson should be submitted to the Manch before it is sent to the printing unit. On hearing this dean frowns, “We cannot submit material to them for approval. That’s outrageous and they know it. My hunch is that they are testing the waters to see how far they can go” (79).

Shiv undergoes intense internal agony. His mind is boggled up by the implications of intellectual censorship, “What kind of country poisons the minds of children, of its youth? And did we fight for freedom so we could divide this teeming, hungry house forever?” (159-160).

One day Shiv is informed by Menon, his colleague, that his module is being sent to some so-called expert committee. He also tells
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Shiv that the head and the dean have been advised by higher-ups – not the university bigwigs but the real ones – that his resignation may be the only way to satisfy the Manch.

Shiv finds his booklets thrown in a corner of the printing-unit storeroom waiting to be pulped. There is a warning sign that quarantines them, a sign like the ones on those ominously shaped vehicles carrying dangerous chemicals: “Caution! Highly Inflammable. Medieval History. Only known antidotes: 500 mg of blissful ignorance or 250 mg of unadulterated lies” (86).

The modules and lessons that were the stuff of Shiv’s normal life, are now replaced by newspapers. He subscribes to five newspapers – instead of his usual two; he feels compelled to read every inch of them, as if they will tell him exactly what to expect next. The ‘Current’ continues to send him relevant little bits to remind him that they have not forgotten him. He would rather throw these sickeningly familiar red-marked ‘news-items’ in the garbage than to read them. But, in fact, he reads them so carefully that the newsprint leaves dirty smudges on his hands. What else can tell him, for instance, that the children of Saints Society in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, have an exclusive hotline to the past? With confidence that would be the envy of any historian, their press release says, “Our Basavanna was a great man sent to earth by Siva himself to do his work among men. There was no question of whether he would succeed or fail, so where is the question of his dying alone in exile? Anyone who refuses to see this must be punished” (91).

The University’s decision to withdraw the lesson on the medieval poet Basavanna by KGU Professor Shiv Murthy sparks sharp criticism in academic circles:

On Wednesday, a large number of academics, including eminent historians Amit Kumar Mookhergee, N. A. Parthasarathy and Amir Quereishi, deplored this action…. We condemn the university’s failure to take a firm stand against this kind of blatant intellectual censorship, which can only lead to further targeting of secular historians (93).

In one of the university meetings, when the lesson on Basava is being discussed, Shiv loses his temper with Mr. Lal and shouts at him, “This is precisely the danger of pandering to any self appointed preservers of culture. what about” (127). Arya pounces on Shiv and has him by the collar. Shiv can feel Arya’s pungent breath on his face. Menon too, joins the fray. He holds Arya by his waist and pulls him
back; “Please let’s remember we are in the university not on the street”(127). Arya lets go off Shiv reluctantly and shakes off Menon.

Arya, however, feels gleeful as the day’s mission has been accomplished. He goes to the door, turns around for a parting shot:
If it comes to defending books by … Who is it … Taslima, Rushdie, if it is someone like that or someone who wants to make a hundred percent blue film about widows in Benares, the secular fundamentalists are all on the street shouting, ‘No ban, no censorship’. But our historians and thinkers and activists get different treatment. They won’t even let’s speak (127).

Shiv is a very simple man who avoids confrontations. Under the young woman’s guidance, Shiv understands the significance of the situation. An otherwise shy and reticent person, Shiv is shown the disadvantages of giving in by Meena, who belongs to the newer, politically aware generation. She mobilizes her group ‘Amar-Jyoti’ and others who dare to stand against fundoos, stage protests and dharnas. Once she asks Shiv, “What is the plan of action? How do we beat your fundoos at their game?” (57). She advises Shiv to commit himself not in writing but before the public eye and media.

When Shiv tells Meena that he never thought his lesson would grow to such epic proportions, she comforts him by saying that his lesson is being used as a pretext for discussing issues like Muslim invasion, Christian missionaries, sons of soil and foreigners, nationalism and so on. Even if Shiv knows that he is an academic and not a rabble-raising activist, he gives in to Meena’s charms and her carefully staged plans to resist the fundamentalists or fudoos as Hariharan calls them. Rising to the occasion, Meena demands that he take a stand and rallies her college friends to his support. Inspired by Basava’s struggle in 1168, Shiv speaks against the fundamentalists and defends his right to teach History with integrity. When the head comes to know that he is going to take the help of media, he warns him, “I must tell you the dean and I are distressed that you are talking to the media. It’s your decision, but if I were you, I would be more cautious” (113). Shockingly enough, Murthy’s other colleagues maintain a callous silence.

Shiv who slunk unobtrusively throughout his life in the wings, surprises himself by taking centrastage in fight against repression, “I will not apologize. I don’t say anything about the other two demands, partly because they don’t involve just me” (69). He wants to fight for
the cause of free intellectual pursuits. The question whether he will continue in the university or not, becomes immaterial. What matters is the awareness, the first hand exposure and experience which this ordinary and cautious Professor gets from the self-appointed contractors of religion, ‘Bhartiya Sanskriti’ and ‘Parampara’. Hariharan succeeds in exhibiting the siege like mentality that exists when extremists set the agenda for intellectuals.

Shiv would like to believe that it is Basava who links 1168 and 2000. Yet it seems it is not the dissident leader who is the critical link, but the hate mongers; the same kind of Manches have been there in the two periods though they are centuries apart. Reprisal upon reprisal followed dissidence. Taxes were increased to fatten temples. Merchants, unable to stand the strikes, the insecure streets and the fresh taxes, left the city in droves. Even the washermen, the barbers and the prostitutes became dangerous enemies of the state. Basava’s men and women began deserting the city; those who remained behind were on strike. Kalyana, the hub of profitable trade and the heart of Basava’s movement, was no longer recognisable. The lamps were no longer lit as the day slipped into night, but flames attacked the city’s organs and smoke choked them. The low caste hovels were set on fire.

The distortions of history by political parties in power, ‘the Hinduisation of education and the interference in academics by the ‘Knicker brigade’ – are some of the issues probed into by Hariharan. It is not just an accident that Shiv is a Professor of History. Immersed in the past, he would probably never had come out of the time warp had Meena not intruded into his scheme of things, forcing him to confront contemporary issues. The story of Basava and the Vijayanagar kingdom of yore find a contemporary parallel in the trials and tribulations of Shiv in New Delhi. Antiquity has been counterpointed with contemporaneity.

Rewriting of history is an important concern in this novel. What all is history, and whose history can claim itself to be the true one? The learned academics may cry themselves hoarse, insisting on the objectivity of their account, but the hired, illiterate mob bent on destruction, is forced to have contrary ideas. The university authorities, well aware of the power of the mob, ultimately bow down before the rabble and concede to its irrational demands. Such a scenario has been recreated in In Times of Siege when the mindless, irrational masses take over, and the voices of the true intellectual are silenced.
In this novel, Hariharan also hits out at those who sit on the fence when others are in crisis. Dangers of indifference are well represented in a poster on the wall of Meena’s room: In Germany, they first came for the communists, and I did not speak up because I was not a communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the homosexuals and I did not speak up because I was not a homosexual.

Then they came for the Catholics and I did not speak up because I was Protestant.

Then they came for me .. but by that time there was no one left to speak up.

Speak Up! Before It’s Too Late (27).

Down the ages, the religious bigots have been responsible for most of the world’s sufferings. In our present age, as Hariharan so adeptly shows, religious fundamentalism can be a major threat to academic freedom, as well as to the very existence of a civil society. The novel draws our attention to the attacks on freedom of expression by citing the instances of Salman Rushdie, Tasleema Nasreen and Deepa Mehta. Blending fact with fiction Hariharan gives us yet another perspective on the unresolved crisis of our times, tacitly asking us what we are doing about it? Although the trouble makers in this novel are Hindus, in only a slightly different setting, they could just as well be extremist Christians or Muslims threatening anyone who does not subscribe to their own strict views. In this case, the timid Shiv Murthy, taking inspiration from a young college girl, summons up the courage to take his life in new direction. The reader gladly identifies with him as he resists not only his antagonists but also the weak-kneed university administration which is ready to compromise its principles.

Works Cited

FEMINIST UTOPIA-SEARCH FOR “EQUALITY”?

Dr Sanobar Hussaini

“Capabilities are clearly manifested only when they have been realized.”

— Simone de Beauvoir (The Second Sex)

Utopia is what you don't have. It is the fantasies about what you lack and you feel lacking in the society. Utopian novels often suggest that such a perfect place is possible, or at least looked for and preferable to the existing social make-up. Usually, in a utopian work, an imaginary country, discovered or described by the narrator, provides an “ideal” political and social state and is compared with an actual earthly society. This possibly includes equality of all citizens, the purging of illness, crime, and war, and the availability of agreeable livelihood (all arguably related to perfect social equality). The desire for and formulation of ideal community models is often predicated upon an assumption of the superiority of a homogenous, common identity.

Utopia was first used by Sir Thomas More as the title for his novel. Since More published his novel many have followed in his footsteps creating utopia. Some of the most known include George Orwell’s ‘1984’, William Burrough’s A Naked Lunch, Anthony Burgess’s A Clockwork Orange and Aldous Huxley’s A Brave New World. Though many utopias were written, only a few male utopian thinkers have been inspiring for different feminist movements. Among them is Charles Fourier (19th century), well known historical male utopian socialist, who focussed on utopian love and sexual liberation and advocated for ‘women’s progress towards liberty’. Numerous 19th century feminists, particularly the Belgian and French Suffragettes, were inspired by some of Fourier’s ideas. But, unfortunately, what we notice is that male utopias are not peculiarly tempting to women. Not often do such utopias give much thought about how women’s lives need to be rethought. Rarely are they allowed to break the limits of wifedom, motherhood and sexual servitude.

While it is quite easy to find the utopias formulated by (and too often for) men it is more difficult to find women’s utopian ideas documented. Nevertheless, the idea of a utopia has inspired many feminist activists and scholars. The utopias thus written by them are labeled feminist utopia. It is feminist because it is firmly rooted in
questioning the present and the place of women in it, and often considers multiple layers of oppression in its analysis. My analysis offers that particular kind of vision and my exploration is the efficacy of utopian literature by feminist writers.

But one wonders, what a truly feminist world looks like? Is it a world… …without men or with men as our equals? …with peace?… with only love? …defined by the mother-child relationship or machines making babies for us? …where sisterhood reigns? …defined by women’s sexual needs? …where order or chaos rules? …dominated by urban centers or is it “back to nature”? …where women work, or are it beyond work? … with a socialist or a capitalist system? …with goddesses or without religion? …where we would enjoy or would it bore us?

Feminist utopia envisages a world which is in stark contrast to patriarchal setup. These novels are usually set in worlds where men are entirely absent. It visualizes a society without gender oppression, envisioning a future or an alternate reality where men and women are not wedged in traditional roles of inequality. The distinguishing feature of all utopian society that women have created, people do not live in the couples we live in now. In order to deal with loneliness and lack of communication, people mostly live together in larger kinship or social groups. In some, we find that sex is romanticized; whereas in others it is much more licentious, much easier, but most of the time it crosses the boundaries of what our society considers appropriate heterosexual activity. Safety is also a major concern for feminist utopias. Usually there is pretty much classlessness. The problems of having enough have been dealt with. Nobody seems to be terribly interested in being filthy rich, but there is also no poverty. Things are pretty well spread around. Its narrative explores the difference in the context of feminist discourse. In search for ideal community, it regards both the existence of social stratification based on difference and the “humanist ideal of sameness” to be problematic (Melzer, 1), as with feminist theories, difference may not always be problematized in the same ways in these narratives. As Frances Bartkowski states, “The feminist utopian novel is a place where theories of power can be addressed through the construction of narratives that test and stretch the boundaries of power in its operational details” (5).

In their endeavor for change, feminist utopias, envisage future manifestations of current social and technological experimentation and deal with current social problems by increasing the visibility of those
evils, often in exaggerative terms. According to bell hooks, “Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives” (26). In its desire for perfect world (utopia), feminist fiction tends to challenge genre boundaries and examines problematic elements of desires (dystopia). Raffaella Baccolini states that women writers expand the boundaries of the traditional utopian genre by creating works that “contain both utopian and dystopian elements,” and by utilizing narratives that resist closure. She terms these works “critical or open-ended dystopias” (13). As such, many works are neither utopian nor dystopian per se, but contain elements of both.

As an example, I present an examination of two texts that I feel fit the definition of feminist utopia: Rokaya Sakhawat Hossain’s *Sultana’s Dream* and Charlotte Perkin Hilman’s *Herland*. These utopias were written by women who belonged to two different cultures, wrote in different times and belonged to different school of feminism-Indian and western; yet we find much in common-issues which are universal, relevant to every woman, cutting across culture and time. But before we go into the details of the text, I would like to throw some light on the background in which these were written.

*Herland* was written in 1915 and originally published as a serial in The Forerunner, a magazine edited and written by Perkins between 1909 and 1916 and was not published in book form until 1979. It was a time of apparent struggle for women across America. The 1910's were filled with inequality between the sexes. Women had already been trying desperately to gain the right to vote for over 50 years, and still only several states had given women suffrage. It was still tremendously believed that women were best seen and not heard. They were expected to remain subservient to their fathers and husbands. Occupational choices for them were also extremely limited. Whereas middle- and upper-class women usually remained home, caring for their children and running the household, lower-class women often did work outside the home, but usually as poorly-paid domestic servants or laborers in factories and mills. Women were expected to stay at home to cook, to clean, to bring up children and to provide a heaven for returning husbands who were the providers, the primary "breadwinners". Most often, the lives of the nineteenth century women were portrayed in negative terms, focusing on their restricted sphere of influence compared to that of men from similar backgrounds. While on the other
hand, in some cases, nineteenth-century women had questionably more positive images in the private sphere. This defined woman as morally more refined than men and therefore the custodian of morality and social cohesion. From this political turmoil, emerged Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*. It is a utopian novel in which three modern men discover a lost country populated entirely by women. Herland, the utopian nation, stands for the capableness, greatness, and potentialities of womankind. Just as the three male leads (Jeff, Van and Terry), the reader by the novel's end realizes that women are in no way inferior to their male counterparts.

In India on the other hand, the colonial government’s comment of Indian society and particularly the position of women generated a crisis among the educated classes. As until 1911, Calcutta was the capital of India, Bengal was the first province to encounter western modernity. The Bengali intelligentsia sensed that a respectable identity could be ministered only through the way the new reformed, educated class placed its women within its social sphere. Thus there came an age where a new woman was defined by the Indian patriarchy. The ‘new woman’ fulfilled roles as perfect wife, mother, and manager of the household and also of a restricted social life. Nevertheless, her status in her own household was higher only than that of minor children and servants. The patriarchy at this time defined the true gentlewoman as untainted, immaculate, sacrificing ad selfless. But the Hindus and Muslims quests for identity were different. In 19th century Bengal, where Hindu traditionalists and modernists contented on the issues of child marriage, polygamy, widow remarriage, purdah and women’s education, Muslim men, in order to catch up with Hindu men, were more interested in acquiring their own education rather than showing interest in women’s development. The main issue with Muslim women was that of Purdah. Women’s practice of purdah was associated with family status and family honor and reflected on the men in their family. Respect in the community was vital to the family status. To gain respect in the family and community, strict observance of purdah was desirous. Societies highly valued obedience and conformity. Honor became a yoke, a harness with which to bridle women. Honor killing broke out in order to control them. It was under these circumstances that Rokeya wrote this novella which was taken as “a terrible revenge” by her husband (Jahan, 2). Published in 1905 science-fiction short story, *Sultana’s Dream*, is set in a utopian future. Very much like the Muslim practice of purdah that kept most women in the home in that
time, women in this world rule where as men are locked away at home. Sultana wakes from a nap and finds her friend Sara inviting her to take a walk. But as they walk Sara turns into a strange woman, and it appears they are in 'Ladyland', a world where women rule and men are locked away. It turns out that this world is superior in many respects to the real India and Sultana and her Guide have a discussion where they compare India's gender segregation to Ladyland's.

In both the novels gender reversal is used throughout. The women in Herland have short hair, the men have long hair “a subtle difference between these women and other women….they all wore short hair” (34); the women teach while the men learn; the women are physically stronger than the men, giving women power and great independence etc. Similarly, the patriarchal power in SD is inverted. Men are confined to mardana designed on the lines of a zenana or the inner sections of a conventional Muslim household where the women lived and the men were not permitted to enter. There the men stay and attend to domestic chores. In Ladyland men are part of society but shorn of power. They live in seclusion and look after the house and children. Women the dominant group does not consider men fit for any skilled work.

In her novel Gilman shows that men can evolve under the influence of women, but women are obviously the superior beings. She does not condemn men, but merely argues that women are endowed naturally with the ideals of nurturing, loving, sensitivity, and the desire and ability to work cooperatively to realize common ideals. Similarly in Rokeya’s story Sultana believes that women have sharper brains than men. “Women’s brain is somewhat quicker than men’s” (4). By this the writers do not wish to make a statement that women are superior to men. It was just a reaction to the existing belief that women are devoid of intellect.

The matriarchy of Herland, unlike patriarchal society, is able to use technology effectively, without repressing or destroying, and at the same time maintaining humane ideals which are too often underrated in technologically advanced societies. In SD, science, technology and humanism work in harmony to make women self-contingent. A distinction is made between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ technology. Feminine technology is based on solar energy, is environment-friendly and non-lethal. ‘Masculine’ technology includes weapons, is industrial, chemical and lethal and therefore unnatural and unfriendly to the environment.
On the first encounter with Herland and its all female realm, the men react according to their macho ideals, beholding women as outlandish creatures whose striking feature is their sexuality. In fact, they perceive them as less than human, as birds or fruit, or as more than human, as goddesses. Jeff "idealized women" (10), while Terry sees them as objects to be sexually conquered and as incapable of building anything requiring cooperation: "Women always . . . fight amongst themselves. We mustn't look to find any sort of order and organization" (9). But over time all three of the male characters learn that Herland greatly outshine their own male-built civilization. It is void of poverty war and even garbage. Jeff, Van, and Terry represent the achievements of our civilization, which has been constructed and defined by men, and is therefore imperfect, full of suffering, war, disease, and other terrible atrocities. In Ladyland too, we find many amenities that were lacking in Rokeya’s India. “We have only to think of the India of horse-drawn carriages, gas-lights, smelly, smoke-filled kitchens, dusty streets, natural disasters, famines and epidemics, cockroaches and mosquitoes—all the big problems and petty nuisances of Indian everyday life” (Jahan, 4).

The fact that a female utopia is far ahead that men have ever made, shows that women can do everything that a man can do and in some respect even better. It satirizes the male gender by implying that women do not really need men. They can do everything men can do. Towards the end of the novel there is a drastic change in the attitude of Jeff and Van. They do not want to leave this perfect utopia and seem disgusted with their own male-constructed civilization. They realize that Herland is an ideal place and this implies that womanhood is greater than manhood. However, this does not mean that Gilman herself believes that women are in every way better than men. She has done this deliberately to reiterate her statement on social reform in favor of women, for which, she must be presented in as favorable a light as possible. Where as in Herland there are no men, Rokeya did not find it necessary to eliminate men or to propose anything so drastic. In Ladyland men are a part of the society but are devoid of power, as women are in Rokeya’s India. Women, the dominant group in Ladyland, do not consider men fit for any skilled work, much as Indian men thought of women at that time. According to the laws of poetic justice, the invincible author is punishing men in an ideal world for their criminal oppression of women in the real world. Through the dialogue of Sultana and Sister Sara, the flaws of many of the rampant
Indian notions of “masculine” and “feminine” character are demonstrated. Sultana who is also the alter ego of the author exalts the wonder of Ladyland and represents the Indian stereotype while Sister Sara presents the outsider’s view. Through Sultana, Rokeya ridicules Indian stereotypes and cultures.

One important theme of these stories is that it defines gender. The writers want to put across that gender is socially constructed rather than something definitive and unchangeable.

“These women, whose essential distinction of motherhood was the dominant note of their whole culture, were strikingly deficient in what we call ‘femininity’. This led me very promptly to the conviction that those ’feminine charms’ we are so fond of are not feminine at all, but mere reflected masculinity-developed to please us because they had to please us, and in no way essential to the real fulfillment of their great process” (66).

For instance, the women of Herland are loving mothers, yet are also strong, independent, and, in some ways, have masculine qualities, such as having short hair. Whereas Jeff out of the three male leads (a man) is in some ways feminine, and, seems least afraid of speaking his mind and showing his feelings. It is not accidental that, when the three male characters are imprisoned by the Herlanders, their hair grows long, which Gilman does deliberately to symbolically link them to women kind. On the other hand in SD, Rokeya has not been able to do that. She still feels that the men are physically stronger than women and therefore they are dangerous.”Men’s arms are stronger than women’s …but they can be overpowered by “brain” (4). Rokeya feels that embroidery and cooking are works which can be done better only by women. “We do not trust our zenana members with embroidery…as a man has not patience enough to pass thread through a needle hole even.” (3) Rokeya’s story does not tell us whether Ladyland changes basic human nature. May be that was not her intention. What we are very sure of is that she never suggested resorting to extreme measures of male seclusion. On the contrary, Rokeya desired for liberty and equality, it is hardly likely that she would have found the domination of either sex agreeable. “She just wants to put across that women may possess faculties and talents equivalent to or greater than men—that they are capable of developing themselves to a stage where they may attain complete mastery over nature without any help from men and create a new world of perfect beauty, great wealth and goodness” (Jahan, 2).
In Herland and Sultana’s Dream, the writers show that their society is unjust to women and does not allow them to achieve their full human potential. Women’s lives, they reveal, are too consumed by difficult, unremunerated “women’s work,” such as childbearing, child rearing, and domestic labor. Because women are limited to this domestic world, they are made out to be less “fully human” than men in their potential for development. Given the chance, the writers say, women can embrace the whole of life just as much men, and the women of Herland and Ladyland—strong, intelligent, and self-reliant—are the fictional embodiment of this point.

Thus we see that both writers emphasize the importance of living a humane, tolerant life, irrespective of one's gender, one's religion. At the same time, they painstakingly expose the human tendency to judge, to be hypocritical, self-centered, and prejudiced. While Gilman focuses on gender differences to show what is valuable in human life and what is detrimental to humanity, Rokeya brings together the social aspects of existence and how it can enhance an individual's humanity by calling him or her to live up the highest ideals of love and friendship. What catches our attention is that it is still oddly relevant to our times. Though we’ve come far since 1915, by no means have we reached equality between the sexes. Even today gender is still a socially constructed and enforced system. The truth is that females today have more pressure on them to be “feminine” than they did during Gilman’s and Rokeya’s time.

While I have only touched on some of the more valuable aspects of Sultana’s Dream and Herland, I hope I have illustrated my most important point: the usefulness of, indeed the necessity for, feminist utopian narrative. The purpose behind writing such speculative fiction is to suggest that there may be alternatives and for this imagination is a very powerful liberating tool. If we cannot imagine something different we cannot work towards it. So such utopias should not be set aside as escapist fantasy. The vision it provides through projection of desire for change, prediction of the future, and confrontation with the present, utopia makes a unique tool for investigating manifestations of power and extrapolating new directions for feminist discourse and social consciousness.

The world we live in is full of severe injustice which is global in its dimensions. Not a single society can claim that it has not been affected by the culture of violence, some forms of exclusion or of injustice. It is in such a milieu that we display the power that we as women have and
how we can use it for the transformation of our societies and of our world. This requires a thoughtful consideration for the development of critical consciousness. Through texts like this, with a particular eye for the future vision and reflection of the present, the scope they provide for mentoring are limitless. We all are after all, in the process of developing alternative political paradigms for the transformation of our societies and of our unjust world.

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SOCIAL EVILS AS PORTRAYED IN MAHESH DATTANI’S PLAYS

Santosh Kumar Sonker

Mahesh Dattani, a Sahitya Akademi award winning Indian English playwright, has relentlessly shed light on the gritty realities of the society which is a hub of such issues which are quite noticeable but generally brushed aside under the carpet of civilization. There are certain hush-hush issues in almost every Indian family which, when leak out and come to the notice of others, become insufferably embarrassing. The practice of having a mistress and her position in the family; the daughter-in-law’s attempt to cause her father-in-law’s death in Where There’s a Will; the passion for fame as a distinguished dancer at the cost of her husband’s career and of her child in Dance Like a Man; mother’s contribution to the physical separation of the Siamese twins (one male another female) at the risk of the life of female child in Tara; the contribution of women in their own exploitation, the extramarital relationship and homosexuality in Bravely Fought the Queen; incestuous relationship in Thirty Days in September; issue of alternate sexuality in On a Muggy Night in Mumbai; and infertility in a man who forms the majority of the society and sexual interest of the minister’s son in a eunuch in Seven Steps around the Fire are glaring issues in our society but are often side tracked.

Where There’s a Will is Dattani’s debut play dealing, along with other issues, with the practice of having a wife as well as a mistress in Indian society. Revolving around the Mehta family, the play brings to light that Hasmukh Mehta keeps a mistress in spite of the fact that he has a typical, caring Indian wife in Sonal. Hasmukh, a patriarch, fails to convince his son to follow in his footsteps, and makes Kiran Javeri, his mistress, the trusty of the Will in order to take revenge on his family after his death. Putting aside Sonal’s devotion, Hasmukh justifies himself claiming that he has never enjoyed sex. He expresses his grudge saying that: “Do you know what Sonal means? . . . ‘Gold.’ When we were newly married, I used to joke with her and say she was as good as gold. But . . . I soon found out what a good-for-nothing she was. As good as mud. Ditto our sex life. Mud. Twenty-five years of my marriage and I don’t think she has ever enjoyed sex” (Collected Plays 472-73).
The situation becomes intolerable when, after Hasmukh’s death, Kiran Javeri reveals before his family members that she is the trustee of the Will and they have to work under her supervision. After the exposition of the ‘will’ which transfers the power and money in the hands of Kiran, Hasmukh’s mistress, all the members of the family are taken aback and every one criticizes Hasmukh for having a mistress. Preeti assumes Ajit responsible for the present condition, “If you had been nicer, all this wouldn’t have happened” (CP 481). Ajit justifies himself saying that “I wasn’t nice to him because he wasn’t cries out that “...he wasn’t exactly in love with me either. If I’d known he had a mistress, I would have left him” (CP 481). Preeti, more conscious of money, says that Hasmukh’s decision of putting Kiran as a trustee of the will is bringing shame on them as every one is saying that “Hasmukh Mehta didn’t have faith in his own family. He didn’t get along with his wife. His son is a spendthrift. His daughter-in-law is a scheming little witch. That’s why he left all his wealth in the hands of an outsider” (CP 493). It is ironical because Preeti is not worried about what the world will say but she is puzzled because of the fact that money is out of their hands. All the members of the family have a reason of not liking Kiran.

Another issue in the play which is quite embarrassing is the replacement of Hasmukh’s tablets of blood pressure in place of the vitamin pills. To usurp the money, Preeti throws Hasmukh’s tablets of blood pressure and instead she replaces the vitamin pills which cause his death but still she has to wait for forty years for the money and have to live life according to the conditions set in the Will, Preeti is annoyed much to her chagrin. Sonal reveals to Kiran that “...Preeti was never like this before. She was nice and caring when he was alive. Now, after the will, she has become unbearable. She frightens me. Sometimes I think she is capable of doing anything for money. You yourself once said that there is something wrong in desiring money with such... passion” (CP 506). Thus, how shocking it is for common people that a daughter-in-law takes her father-in-law’s life just for the sake of money.

Dance Like a Man also touches upon the issues which cast aspersions on modern human relationship when they are exposed. Dealing with dance as a profession and vocation in Indian society the play reveals that the protagonist’s promising future as dancer is crushed under a handful of social taboos related to it i.e. dance is a
feminine art and should be practiced by females. The play also puts question on husband- wife relationship by focusing that the protagonist’s over ambitious wife connives with her father-in-law to dragoon him into giving up dance as a career. It is true that “The play questions the male stereotypes and points out that the male identity is a construction conditioned by social norms and expectations” but “it does so by involving those very same constructions for the female characters” (Multani 59).

Amritlal Parekh, Jairaj’s father, is an autocratic patriarch who considers dance as an art form practiced by the prostitutes in particular and women in general. He stops his son not to think of taking up dance as a profession because it will lead him nowhere. Amritlal, being wise enough to imagine Jairaj’s future as a dancer, explains the reason why he does not want to let Jairaj practise dance, “A woman in a man’s world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman’s world is pathetic” (Dance Like a Man 50). He is so prejudiced against dance that he is unable to tolerate Jairaj’s Guru Ji’s presence in his house. He becomes crazy when Ratna reveals that Jairaj is going to practise Kachipudi, a dance form in which a man dresses up as a woman and is planning to grow his hair to make his abhinay impressive. Seeing gritty determination for taking up dance as a profession in Jairaj, Amritlal Parekh tries to win his daughter-in-law’s favour by giving her opportunity to practise dance but on the condition that she will help him in taking Jairaj out of it. She agrees to him with an eye to her future as a distinguished dancer. She gradually ruins what is best in Jairaj as an artist. Jairaj, who is longing for his lost self-esteem, tells her where and how she used him:

Bit by bit. You took it when you insisted on top billing in all our programs. You took it when you made me dance my weakest items. You took it when you arranged the lighting so that I was literally dancing in your shadow. And when you called me names in front of other people. Names I feel ashamed to repeat even in private. And you call me disgusting. (DLM 69-70)

In the full glare of publicity as an acclaimed dancer, she loses not only her relationship with her husband but her child also. She often goes to give her performances living her child on the mercy of Ayya who gives the child a dose of opium just to sleep freely which leads to the death of the child.
**Tara** is a story of Siamese twins—one male and the other female. The play dramatizes how a woman becomes perpetrator of the male chauvinistic ideas forgetting that her decision to prefer a male child to female one may ruin the latter’s life. According to Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri: “The play looks at the battles, the victories and the defeats on an Indian family coping with the trauma of freak children and their survival, while also exposing the existing patriarchal stereotypes of the Indian mindset, which has always preferred a boy child to a girl child” (37). Charu Mathur has opined that “**Tara** is a riveting play that questions the role of society that treats the siblings with double standards” (166).

Having three legs, the Siamese twins, who were conjoined at birth, had to go through a surgical operation to get separated. Against the doctor’s opinion that the third leg would survive on the girl child, Bharati, the mother, agrees to her father in conniving with the doctor to give the third leg to the girl child. The doctor who is supposed to be the god for the patient forgets his all moral duties just for the sake of a few acre land in the prime of the city and attaches the third leg to the girl child which goes rotten with the passage of time and both, the boy child and the girl child become freaks.

The very first speech of Tara reveals it is society which demarcates the line between two genders. Tara says, “And me. Maybe we still are. Like we’ve always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we are forced out . . .” (*CP* 325). In a monologue Dan reveals that how Tara has suffered unfair treatment from the society and the family, “She never got a fair deal. Not even from nature. Neither of us did. May be God never wanted us to be separated. Destiny desires strange things” (*CP* 330). Roopa, a girl from the neighbourhood, enters the room and finds Tara’s father talking to his children, asks if she is disturbing them, Tara ironically remarks: “Not at all. The men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave” (*CP* 328). Tara’s observation about the home confined identity of women seems to be convincing because Patel always wants Chandan to become a man, however, he is interested in art, music and dance. Later, when Chandan helps her mother to correct the mistake she made while knitting the sweater for Tara, Patel blames her for spoiling his career by involving him in such works and showing off more affection and love but the fact is that Chandan himself was
assisting her. Bharati, who is responsible for Tara’s crippled life with irredeemable suffering due to physical disability, realizes her pain, “It’s all right while she is young . . . But let her grow up. Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you. The world will accept you—but not her! Oh, the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty” (CP 348-49). She tries to make up the crime she did against her child by expressing her love towards Tara. She bribes Roopa, with a video cassette and offers her to come to her place to watch movies just to become Tara’s friend. Not only this, she quarrels with her husband for her career also. But it is too late because her decision of giving the third leg to the girl child has left Tara to face the brutality of the world. After facing the torture meted out to her by Roopa, Prema and Nalini who represent the society and the discrimination at the hands of her father who always heaps opportunity of building his career on Chandan, Tara lapses into depression and realizes her neglected identity:

Oh, what a waste! A waste of money. Why spend all the money to keep me alive? It cannot matter whether I live or die. There are thousands of poor sick people on the roads who could be given care and attention. . . . I will be a carer for those people. I . . . I will spend the rest of my life feeding and clothing those . . . starving naked millions everyone is taking about. Maybe I can start an institution that will . . . do all that. Or I could join Mother Teresa and sacrifice myself to a great cause. That may give . . . purpose to my . . . existence. (CP 370)

Bravely Fought the Queen throws light on the home confined identity and exploitation of women at the hands of not only men but also women and their resistance. The play also exposes issue of extramarital relationship and touches upon the issue of homosexuality.

Revolving around the Trevedi family which consists of Jiten and Nitin Trivedi, Baa, Dolly and Alka, the play depicts the exploitation of women in the family. Indian society considers women as uncivilized, rude, and ill-mannered needing to be polished. The process of the refinement of their actions and their behaviour horrifies our eyes violence is the tool which is used for the socialization of the women. Alka’s present condition is the result of this civilizing process which also creates a rift between Dolly and Alka who are managed by their
brother Praful. Alka explains the atrocity committed on her by her brother:

I came home from school with the neighbor’s son on his scooter instead of walking with you. . . . He didn’t understand and dropped me right at our doorstep. Praful saw. He didn’t say a word to me. He just dragged me into the kitchen. He lit the stove and pushed my face in front of it! I thought he was going to burn my face! He burnt my hair. I can still smell my hair on fire. . . . Praful said, ‘Don’t you ever look at any man. Ever.’ (BFQ 31-32)

Her suffering is not limited to her maternal home, she has been thrown out of the family by the Trivedi brothers for the simple reason that she cannot bear Baa’s abuse for the mistake Praful is responsible for and, in a drunken state, insults Baa saying that “Your sons are so different from one another. . . . Do they have different fathers?” (BFQ 31). Commenting on the process of civilizing women Payal Nagpal appropriately remarks: “The sexual policing of women is not uncommon in the urban metropolitan society. Women are given liberties according to the whims and fancies of their patriarchs. . . . Alka is passed from the guardianship of Praful to that of Nitin, a trusted friend. She needs to be controlled as if she were a bundle of desires that were going to explode in the absence of any restraint” (82).

Dattani explains that it is not Dolly and Alka only who are suffering at the hands of their husbands but Baa, like Shanta in Thirty Days in September, also has been the subject of male brutality in spite of the fact that she inherited a lot of property from her maternal home. She often slips into her past, a very general thing for the old, which uncovers that she loved to sing but her husband did not support her.

Dolly also suffers a kind of exploitation at the hands of her mother-in-law and her husband. It is Baa who is behind Dolly’s mentally and physically challenged child, Daksha. When Dolly was pregnant, she ordered Jiten to beat her for the reason that Praful told a lie which Dolly was not responsible for. Baa repents it by leaving her property in the name of Daksha with the protection of Praful as the trustee. Thus, like Bharati in Tara, Baa fails to realize her anguish and contributes to the patriarchal system by causing trouble to her daughter-in-laws with the help of her sons. It is due to his association with his father that Jiten beats up Dolly at her mother’s behest. Dolly reverberates the past event to make Jiten realize his guilt:
At the hospital, you told them I fell down the stairs! Daksha was born—two months premature. With the cord around her neck! (Pause.) I saw her and I knew! I knew instantly! Your mother loved her more than was natural! Praful loved her. More than was natural. You love her. You love her more than Baa or Praful! Because you feel the most guilt! (BFQ 97)

Jiten starts crying arguing that “I didn’t mean to . . . you know I didn’t. It was Baa! Blame her but not me! She is my daughter! (Crying.) Get her back! Get her back! Get her from wherever she is. I want her home” (BFQ 97). But Dolly does not want him to escape: “No! Oh no! I will not let you get away so easily! They were your hands hitting me! Your feet kicking me! It’s in your blood! It’s is in your blood to do bad!” (BFQ 97).

Dattani in the play reveals the hidden world of the Trivedi brothers who run an advertising agency named Re Va Tee where Sridhar, a worker, works hard in collecting the consumer opinion, is treated unfairly by them. His exploitation is not limited to mental and physical labour but he bears the pain to manage a prostitute for Jiten who makes it clear that Sridhar’s duty will only be complete when he gets a girl for him. Sridhar’s failure to procure a whore for his boss, Jiten,angers him and he says, “You call yourself an advertising professional and you don’t want to pimp?” (BFQ 68). Unable to fight with his boss face to face, Sridhar takes revenge on him by using the girl he has managed for Jiten. Asked by Jiten bout the girl’s condition he says, “She’s young and fresh! (Under his breath.) And she is great. I had her on the back seat. You can have my leftovers” (BFQ 72).

If Jiten is a lascivious and unscrupulous person, Nitin has a sexual relationship with Alka’s brother Praful. Baa and Dolly both suffer the exploitation but Alka’s case is different; her anguish and frustration is because of her husband’s homoerotic libido and Praful’s lack of frankness in not exposing Nitin’s reality to her. To make up her frustration, she

Like his earlier play, Bravely Fought the Queen, and his later play, Seven Steps around the Fire, which touch upon the issue of alternate sexuality, this play, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai elaborately discusses the plight of the sexually marginalized people—homosexuals and lesbians and the effects of homosexual relationship on human ties. In the introductory note to the play, John McRae has appropriately observed that “It is not simply the first play in Indian theatre to handle
openly gay themes of love, partnership, trust and betrayal. It is a play about how society creates patterns of behaviour and how easy it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations society creates” (*Collected Plays* 45).

In the play, Kamlesh loves Prakash who fails to face the social oddities as a homosexual and turns into a heterosexual. It breeds in Kamlesh a perennial anguish. In trying to suppress his feelings for Prakash, Kamlesh becomes miserable, week and helpless and, the only way to get rid of his obsession, is to be in Sharad’s company. He expresses his agony: “I would have understood it if he had left me for another man, but he left me because he was ashamed of our relationship. It would have worked between us, but he was ashamed. I was very angry” (*CP* 68-69).

Kamlesh externalizes his feelings for Prakash saying that “I am obsessed even more by the memory of Prakash. I-I feel I cannot live without him” (*CP* 70). Later in depression he realizes: “I know now that I have been chasing an illusion. Perhaps the man I loved does not exist” (*CP* 102). When Kamlesh discloses that he has exploited Sharad to forget Prakash but has not succeeded, Sharad retorts: “I can forgive you for using me—hell, I used you as well. But I can’t forgive you for calling all of us here to tell us you never did love me” (*CP* 68). Sharad who is “as gay as a goose” (*CP* 100) challenges Ed who has the mask of heterosexuality and considers heterosexuals as “a real man” (*CP* 99). He mocks at the idea of heterosexuality and boldly reveals the man power of gays and the pleasure of homosexuality:

> You see, being a heterosexual man—a real man, as Ed put it—I get everything. I get to be accepted . . . I can have a wife, I can have children who will adore me simply because I am a hetero—I beg your pardon—a real man. Now why would I want to give it all up? So what if I have to change a little? If I can be a real man, I can be king. Look at all the kings around you, look at all the male power they enjoy, thrusting themselves on to the world, all that penis power! Power with sex, power with muscle, power with size. Firing rockets, exploding nuclear if you can do five times, I can do it six times and all that stuff. . . . Power, man! Power! (*CP* 101)

Bunny and Prakash/Ed enjoy homosexuality under mask of heterosexuality. Bunny, who is a bisexual, is a hypocrite. He claims to be a perfect husband because he loves his wife more than any
heterosexual man does; his wife boasts of his work to the neighbours as she has no problem with him; and his children who love him are popular in school. But his confession about his homosexuality reveals dissatisfaction in his life: “I know. Just as the man whom my wife loves does not exist. I have denied a lot of things. The only people who know me—the real me—are present here in this room. And you all hate me for being such a hypocrite” (CP 103). Kiran, who is abused and beaten by her husband, divorces him with her brother’s help and falls in Prakash’s love. Being unaware of his gay relationship with her brother Kiran appreciates him. Kiran enjoys his love and feels very happy. She says: “I have no regrets. I feel like a complete woman with him. (Laughs). I know this may sound a little old-fashioned to you, but he is so male. So protective, so caring and yet so assertive” (CP 105). But when his reality of being a gay is exposed to her, she is filled with depression and asks Ed: “What did you want from me? What did you want from me so badly that you couldn’t care how much you hurt me for it” (CP 107).

Against the oppressive social structures the gays want to live their lives in their own way and do not want the society to interfere in their personal interest. Kamlesh asks “If two men want to love one another, what’s the harm?” (CP 91). Not only the gays but the heterosexuals also find the social restrictions on their lives unbearable. Ed, who is a homosexual turned heterosexual, says: “if a man and a woman want to dance together, what is their’s problem? (CP 91). Deepali who is a lesbian also feels the need of freedom. She says: “I really wish they would allow gay people to marry” (CP 98). At this Ranjit makes a realistic statement: “Oh, they do. Only not to the same sex” (CP 98). Dattani presents the humanistic view of society through the character, Bunny who says, “All I am saying is that we should all forget about categorizing people as gay or straight or bi or whatever, and let them do what they want to do!” (CP 88).

The issue of incestuous relationship before reaching the puberty in Thirty Days in September shocks the audience. Revolving around Mala and Shanta, the play reveals the betrayal in blood relationship in a country like India where even to think of such relationships is beyond imagination. Mala, sexually abused by her maternal uncle, at the age of six has to suffer continuous sexual molestation which leads her to the arms of any mam whom she comes in contact with. She holds her mother responsible for her plight. She says: “The only person who can,
who could have prevented all this is my mother. Sometimes I wish she would just tell me to stop. She could have prevented a lot from happening . . .” (Collected Plays II 18). However she finds that her mother has a totally escapist attitude towards her plight. The following speech in which Mala asks her mother about her absence when she (Mala) was raped reveals her pain:

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

Her anger towards her mother becomes more violent when her mother, instead of talking to her, escapes to the Pooja room to avoid the reality. Her suppressed desires against her mother’s cover of silence start coming out in the form of rebellion and she cries out, “I won’t let you get off so easily. There is only one way I can make you listen to me” (CP II 26). She goes to the pooja room and throws the portrait of the God out. It breaks Shanta’s patience and she accuses Mala of her willing participation in sexual pleasure. Mala cries out, “He bought your silence. So that you can never tell anyone what he did to your daughter!” (CP II 52). Thus, along with the humiliation of her body, her spirit, her privacy and her innocence is also raped. Thus, Mala’s anguish and pain is intensified from her realization of her mother’s betrayal. In this regard Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri observes: “Child sexual abuse spans a range of problems, but it is this complicity of the family through silence and a lack of protest that is the ultimate betrayal for the abused” (73). Moved by Mala’s pain, Shanta reveals the reality of her life and the reason for her keeping her lips shut:

I was six, Mala. I was six. And he was thirteen . . . and it wasn’t only summer holidays. For ten years! For ten years!! (Pointing to the picture of God.) I looked to Him. I didn’t feel anything. I didn’t feel pain, I didn’t feel pleasure. I lost myself in Him. He helped me. He helped me. By taking away all feelings. No pain no pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. Shanti. But my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off somewhere. I didn’t use it, no. I cannot shout for help, I cannot say words of comfort, I cannot even speak about it. No, I can’t. I am dumb. (CP II 55)
In this way, both mother and daughter share the same fate. Both suffer molestation in their infancy which affects their lives—Shanta becomes senseless to pain and pleasure but Mala always feels longing for sexual gratification. Shanta’s silence, which she takes as Shanti, ruins two lives—hers and her daughter’s.

*Seven Steps around the Fire* depicts the plight of the eunuchs in the Indian society shedding light on the love and betrayal in human relationship. Throwing light on Uma’s plight in the society as well as in the family, Dattani highlights that the eunuchs’ position is better than women as they are free to give vent to their desires in their domain. Uma, a research scholar in Sociology working on the plight of the eunuchs, has no identity of her own as she is always addressed as a wife of the Superintendent of Police and daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, and the daughter of the Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University. When she visits the cell where Anarkali is imprisoned for the case study she is overwhelmed perceiving the brutality the eunuchs are meted out in the prison. Munswamy, her bodyguard addressed Anarkali with pronouns like it, they which indicates that the eunuchs in the society are not treated as human beings instead as things. He suggests her to leave the case as there are lots of cases dealing with such issues as murder, rape etc. Suresh, her husband, also hates them and addresses them as castrated degenerated men. The eunuchs are discriminated and hated in the society because of their inability to produce children. But Suresh is also infertile. He does not go to the doctor, who declares Uma medically fit for mothering a child, just for count sperm as it is against his male libido and will uncover his true self. At Subbu’s wedding with the help of the eunuchs who during their singing and dancing show him the photograph consisting of Subbu and Kamala in wedding dress Uma becomes successful to get the real culprit behind Kamala’s murder. She is revealed that it is the Minister who got Kamala burnt to death because of his false pride and prestige which was in danger as his son, Subbu had married a eunuch, Kamala. In an utter longing for Kamal’s love, Subbu also shoots himself with Suresh’s pistol. But Suresh for the sake of his promotion as a Commissioner of Police hushes up the story as an incident and does not report it in the register. And thus, the eunuchs’ voices remain unheard.

Anarkali gives a locket to her and says that “A special mantra is in the locket. Champa gave this to me for you. You will be blessed with
children” (CP II 282). After knowing the truth Uma realizes the injustice done to them:

They knew. Anarkali, Champa and all the hijra people knew who was behind the killing of Kamala. They have no voice. The case was hushed up and was not even reported in the newspapers. Champa was right. The police made no arrests. Subbu’s suicide was written off as an accident. The photograph was destroyed. So were the lives of two young people . . . But Anarkali’s blessings remain with me. (Touching the locket.) I could not tell her I did not want her blessings for a child. All I want is—what they want . . . To move on. To love. To live. (CP II 282)

Both Uma and Anarkali suffer marginalization due to the biased attitudes of the society and lack an individual self.

Thus, Dattani undoubtedly is a dramatist committed to addressing the problems and predicaments central to or peripheral to the contemporary Indian society which people generally fight shy of.

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THE SPIRITUAL AND THE VISIONARY: MYSTICAL NARRATIVE IN GIBRAN’S THE PROPHET

Shabir Hussain Ganaie (Shabir Magami)

This book occupies a unique place in world literature and to assess its true value and importance has never been an easy task for the literary pundits. The book presents us with a remarkable insight into life and generates hope as it is unflinchingly optimistic in stance. The book is a marvel of inspiration and conveys a universal message that mingles the dignity of Christian scriptures with the wisdom of Islamic Sufism. It also evinces the influence of Buddhism, Hinduism, Romanticism and Transcendentalism. It reads as a Bible in both its style as well as content. According to Najjar, “The Prophet reads like a holy book. Its style, its structure and its tune are somewhat similar to those of Bible, particularly the Gospels.” And in the words of Barbara Young, “The twenty-eight chapters of the book form a little Bible, to be read and loved by those at all ready for the truth.”

Kahlil Gibran had no purpose in writing The Prophet other than to gratify the spiritual hunger of world plagued by the evils and the dark forces of materialism, commercialism and commodity fetishism. The people were in dire need to come out of the void which the loss of spirituality had cast them into. They had no hope but to yield once again to the dictates of inner consciousness on their way to redemption as the disease nourished by the world of substance was growing more and more menacing. They were waiting for a ray of hope, for a prophetic message which would carry them on its wings from the inferno of iron and gold to the paradise of peace and salvation. Even the religion which was once considered the fountainhead and the mainspring of spirituality had lost its redemptive force, because of its orthodoxy, dogmatic nature and institutionalization. The Prophet came at the right time in the history of mankind and quite successfully acted as a balm in healing the scars which the loss of God consciousness had inflicted on the mind and heart of humanity. In the words of Alexandre Najjar, “This little book gives answers to people who are in search of a spirituality they can’t find, or do not know how to find, in a modern society worn down by materialism, superficiality and anxiety, or in institutionalized religion.” Gibran, owing to his extremely sensitive mind and visionary insights, had told Mary Haskell (his mentor and patron in America) about the yearnings and longings of his soul, long
before he came to write the book. He felt the spiritual hunger of his people deep within and such was the confidence of his in his own visions that he resolved to set the world right as it was living on the edge suspended between the devil and the deep sea. Gibran wrote in a letter to Marry, “This world is hungry, Mary, and I have seen and heard the hunger of the world; and if this is bread it will find a place in the heart of the world, and if it is not bread it will at least make the hunger of the world deeper and higher” Gibran’s prophecy proved true in that the people who now read *The Prophet* consider it a spiritual and a mystic treatise holding a mirror to the veiled mysteries of the complex phenomenon called Life. They read their own lives and the lives of their fellow beings in the light of the book and try to overcome their spiritual shallowness by heeding to the timeless and universal truths which adorn its pages. This book presents Gibran as a writer of prophetic vision and spiritual insight who made his spiritual gifts available to the people, his contemporaries as well as future generations. As an astute Sufi and a man of grand vision, Almustafa (the prophet and the protagonist of the book and the mouthpiece of Gibran) teaches moral values, makes known the mysteries of life and shares his timeless knowledge about the human condition. He describes the longing of the soul for regeneration and self-fulfillment. He teaches that man’s purpose on this planet is a mystic quest towards a ‘Greater Self’, towards ‘God hood’ and ‘the Infinite’. Gibran had a firm faith in the infinity of life. He believed that man needs to explore his inner being in order to meet his true self which is boundless and limitless. Man’s way to the union with God lies in his own heart but for that he needs to awaken spiritually. In the words of N. Niamy:

“Stripped of its poetical trappings Gibran’s teaching in *The Prophet* is found to rest on the single idea that life is one and infinite. As a living being, man in his temporal existence is only a shadow of his real self. To be one’s real self is to be one with the infinite to which man is inseparably related. Self-realization, therefore, lies in going out of one’s spatio-temporal dimensions, so that the self is broadened to the extent of including everyone and all things.

Gibran strongly believed in the power of the human soul. The book is a spiritual journey and an odyssey of the inner consciousness into the human life and it particularly dwells on the common people’s thirst for life. Almustaffa with the help of his spiritual philosophy and intuitive wisdom goads us towards our ultimate aim that is to search for the true
significance of life. Reading the book one realizes that life apart from being a physical reality is a dwelling place for spirit and has innumerable treasures to offer but to those who dare to delve deep and explore. Almustaffa in his words and deeds teaches truth, wisdom and knowledge with such prophetic authority and mystic fervor that one gets carried away at first, but after contemplating the words is rewarded with such a balance and equipoise that the life changes for ever and at the same time one become conscious of the inner spiritual potential which is innate with every human being. He believes that truth opens the world of wisdom and wisdom teaches unwavering devotion and love for life and its varied gifts. But Gibran does not rest on life pure and simple. He talks about death and life in one breath, not making them a duality but a unity never to be alienated from each other. Life and death are not seen in a paradoxical relationship but as concomitant realities supplementing each other and fulfilling each other. Life does not end with death as is usually understood; instead death holds the promise of rebirth and evermore life. Almustafaa deliberating on life and death says:

“You would know the secret of death. But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?”

He further states:

“For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.”

Gibran using Almustaffa as his mouth piece brings everything back to God and teaches people to aspire for a ‘Giant-self’ by opening the hearts to the sacred and holy feeling of love. Like all the mystics and visionaries Gibran held Love in great esteem. For him love opens the window to the spiritual realm so that the visions of angels and greater realities descend on our consciousness and makes us complete. Love is the only path, the only door which leads a mortal to the palace of God. Love is such a spiritual power that it makes us one with God.

“When you love you should not say, ‘God is in my heart,’ but rather, ‘I am in the heart of God’”

Love is the only reality and the only source. Love is God. The rest is naught. It is the annihilation of self. It has no source but it is a source of everything visible and invisible, mortal and immortal. Almustaffa says:

“Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself. Love possesses not nor would be possessed. For love is sufficient unto love.”
The book invites us to a mystical flight towards the ideal world. Almustaffa talks about Man’s relationship with the world and the people inhabiting it as well as with God. Gibran presents his prophet Almustafa as a wise sage, a hermit who has tread the holy path and whose sayings light up our everyday earthly existence and give some hope to our mundane everyday life. With his extraordinary oratory he lovingly helps us to divulge our own essential being to ourselves. We are made to meet our true self. Reading this book one realizes that our mission on this earth is to scale the sacred mountains within and to commune with the all powerful source from which we came and then with great empathy and love yield ourselves to our fellow beings that need us as we need them.

At the outset, Almustaffa, the great prophet, who is about to say farewell to the city of Orphalese, is asked by the seers Almitra to speak about life.

“Now therefore disclose us to ourselves, and tell us all that has been shown you of that which is between birth and death”

He begins with a sermon on love and goes on to discuss issues related to seemingly mundane and everyday concerns but invests them with a spiritual aura unparalleled in the history of literature. He stresses on the sacredness of our daily lives. But at the same time he dwells deep on more philosophical and mystic matters such as Good and Evil, Self-knowledge, Time, Religion, Death, Beauty, Prayer etc. In his opinion religion is not a public affair but a personal belief. It should work from within and color one’s day to day life. One does not need to go to a mosque, a church, or a temple in order to seek God. God lives in our every breath and to live means to be conscious of His presence in every pore of ourselves. To celebrate life with an honest and solemn zeal means acknowledging the presence of a super power whose essence permeates and pervades everything, material as well as metaphysical. Talking about religion he says:

“Your daily life is your temple and your religion. Whenever you enter into it take with you your all.”

In his view children are a link in a divine chain. They come from a heavenly source. Parent is only a medium as they give birth to a child and through the child God fulfills his divine self.

“Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life’s longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.”
Talking about houses Almustaffa says that houses belong to the realm of material. They can not fulfill our spiritual needs. Man being infinite can not be bound by any earthly shelter. Man’s essential self has no limits or bounds. He is apparently a mere body but in essence man is a vast sea, a mammoth mountain whose gigantic being can not be scaled by any measurement possible. Man is as infinite as the universe and the secrets he has in his mind and heart are myriad and innumerable

“And though of magnificence and splendor, your house shall not hold your secret nor shelter your longing. For that which is boundless in you abides in the mansion of the sky, whose door is the morning mist, and whose windows are the songs and the silence of the night.”

In the opinion of Almustaffa marriage is a sacred union of two souls. It is a holy relation having a stamp of God on it. Man and woman are co sharers in divinity. They are fundamentally one and can never be split. No force on earth can divide the two because God has created them as one reality to be together for ever. The bond between man and a woman is indissoluble and can not be severed even by death.

“You were born together, and together you shall be for evermore.
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.
Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.”

Talking about work he says that to keep on working means celebrating life and its numerous bounties. Work is akin to worship. Idleness is a curse detested by God.

“You work that you may keep pace with the earth and the soul of earth.
For to be idle is to become a stranger unto the seasons, and to step out of life’s procession that marches in majesty and proud submission towards the infinite.”

According to him joy and sorrow are one reality. Sorrow is essential for the enjoyment of happiness as it makes Man a more sensitive soul. Mystics and visionaries throughout the ages have looked upon pain and sorrow as a crucible with the help of which humans become pure and are consecrated to be received in the presence of divinity. Pain makes a human being wholesome and the happiness
which succeeds pain is more agreeable, satisfying and fulfilling to the inner spirit.

“The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter’s oven?
And is no the lute that soothes your spirit the very wood that was hollowed with knives.”

Almustaffa has a firm belief that man like God is all knowing because he is not separate from divinity. Talking about Teaching he says:

“No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies in the dawning of your knowledge.”

Talking about prayers Almustaffa says:

“When you pray you rise to meet in the air those who are praying at that hour, and whom save in prayer you may not meet.”

He further states:

“God listens not to your words save when he himself utters them through your lips.”

The Prophet holds an urgent appeal to the humanity that they once again return to understanding with nature. It emphasizes the relationship that unites man to his surrounding environment and to his fellow creatures. The message of The Prophet is social in nature. It talks about spiritual matters but searches for them in the relationships men maintain in the society. Joseph Peter Ghougassian says, “Fundamentally all the sermons of The Prophet revolve around one dimension of human reality; the authentic social relations.” All the creatures become denizens of one world united with each other by the forces of life and death. People share in their strength as well as in their weaknesses and the salvation of an individual is the salvation of the society. Almustaffa accentuates and subscribes to the belief held by all the religions of the world that we must do for others what we like others to do for us. Like all great mystics Gibran tries to reconcile the contrary forces of good and evil, joy and sorrow, life and death and sees them as a perfect synthesis. These seemingly opposite forces are a source for each other and are a perfect unity. Gibran believes that man has both good and evil in him. Man has a potential to become both God as well as the devil. The dark forces of evil and the sacred powers of good live in him concurrently.
“But I say that even as the holy and the righteous cannot rise beyond the highest which is in each one of you,
So the wicked and the weak cannot fall lower than the lowest which is in you also.”

Men are collectively responsible for the deeds of humanity. They share in both wrong and right of each other because they are one procession moving ahead towards the ultimate reality. Man is the way and he himself is the destination. The negative forces in man can not nullify the God given positives inherent to every being. The essential fact is that we are one with all in both our right as well as our wrong actions.

“So the wrong-doer cannot do wrong without the hidden will of you all.
Like a procession you walk together towards your god-self.
You are the way and the wayfarers.”

He further states:

“You cannot separate the just from the unjust and the good from the wicked;
For they stand together before the face of the sun even as the black thread and the white are woven together.

The central mystic principle Gibran adheres to in The Prophet is that God is latent within every life form. He is a ‘Greater Self’ dwelling in every individual soul. Gibran sees a world as a perfect unity and life as a timeless harmony. The mysticism of this book appeals to our shared concepts and shared practices and reveals an intense preoccupation with the visionary and the spiritual. Its striking feature is its spiritual-moral approach. The mystical teachings contain so much that is analogous to the teachings of Christ. The readers who explore deep into the book get an insight into the higher meaning and purpose of human existence. We are encouraged to yield gladly to the embracing wings of love for our own spiritual growth and we are made competent to gauge the secrets of our own hearts. What makes Gibran’s The Prophet so singular is its sublimity and grandeur which gives it a fundamental elating force. It derives its beauty out of a thought provoking spiritual range of life. This book is a longing for the unity of being. It brings harmony and peace for everyone seeking solace and wisdom in a world that has gone spiritually bankrupt. It
speaks directly to the core of the human soul. In fact it presents human soul as essentially dignified and good.

Almustaffa delivers everything that he has gained all through his life. Now is his time to leave from the world of time and space and go back to his isle of birth where he will attain salvation. This salvation is a sort of mystical rebirth for him. He will live in eternity and never be dead. He will come back to the tornado of life in countless lives and deaths. In the words of Mikhail Naimy, “… in a broader light Orphalese may be taken to symbolize the earth, and Almustaffa’s exile in it to refer to the detachment of the individual spirit from the All-Spirit during its earthly pilgrimage. The ‘Isle of Birth’ then, would be the bosom of the All-Spirit, or the centre of life universal?” Almustaffa’s farewell address reads as:

“A little while, and my longing shall gather dust and foam for another body. A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me.”

Behind Almustaffa’s comprehensive vision of a harmonious universe cured by the powers of love and unity, there is a fundamental notion of unity of all religions and the indispensable oneness of humanity. Gibran gives voice to a universal humanist message and truths applicable to all cultures and eras. In The Prophet, “East and west meet in a mystic union unparalleled in modern literature.”

References
CONSCIOUS REVOLT AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE WORKS OF SHAW, IBSEN AND TAGORE

Dr. Shweta Srivastava

Man and woman both are equal and play vital role in the creation and development of their families. “Gender Inequality” means that our society is divided on the basis of sex. This inequality can be observed in the very basic unit of our society i.e. family. Our society welcomes male child is in a family where as female child is taken as a curse on the family. People make show that they are modern and educated even then this evil of ‘gender inequality’ is there as it was ages ago. Many social reformers stand up to demolish this evil from this curse but the condition of females is really pathetic in this male dominated society.

Rajaram Mohan Rai was an active social reformer and he had done a great job against unjust system of ‘Sati Pratha’. Raja Dwarikanath, grand father of Rabindranath Tagore also stand against this system.

It is the belief that woman have equal political, social/sexual, intellectual and economic rights as men do. It is a discourse that involves various movements, theories and philosophies which are concerned with the issue of gender differences, the avocational equality for women, and the campaign for women’s rights and interests.

Feminist activists have campaigned for women’s legal rights (rights of contract, property rights, voting rights); for women’s right of bodily integrity and autonomy, for abortion rights, and for reproductive rights (including access to contraception and quality prenatal care); for protection from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape; for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay; and against other forms of discrimination.

Indeed, the struggle for legal equality has been one of the major concerns of the women’s movement all over the world. In India, since long back, women were concerned as an oppressed section of society and they were neglected for centuries. Gandhiji gave a call of emancipation of women. He was of the opinion that the difference in gender denotes no difference in status. Throughout his life, he worked hard for the upliftment of the socially downtrodden women in India.

The women of his period took a milestone step towards re-establishing
their identity in the society. Gandhiji's inspiring ideologies boosted their morale and helped them to rediscover their self esteem. The custom of child marriage became a target of his criticisms. In his opinion, child marriage is a source of physical degeneration as much as a moral evil. The system of dowry could not pass unnoticed from his critical eyes. He defined dowry marriages as 'heartless'. He was of the opinion that girls should never marry men who demand dowry, at the cost of their self respect and dignity because he believed that wife is not the husband's slave but his companion and his help-mate and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows - as free as the husband to choose her own path.

In English Literature many authors have worked on the miserable condition of women in the male dominated society. The appearance of G.B. Shaw on the literary horizon coincided with the emergence of the ‘New Women’; the term was applied to any women who presumed to associate her with the movement that aimed at bringing about an equality of the sexes. His portrayal of women in his works bears witness to the high opinion that he had of women.

Shaw felt that this depiction of women as sentimental, tearful angelic creatures was neither true nor flattering. Therefore, he marched into the theatre determined to show a new kind of the women who swept into the paper basket the useless false conception of woman so far held dear. In his play *Candida* he attacks the idea of moral slavery which makes society to believe that a wife is a moral slave to her husband.

According to Shaw that marriage is a sexual contract between man and woman, and the economic slavery of woman. He also said that husband is a parasite on his wife’s work. It is she who does all the domestic chores to keep the husband free and undisturbed to pursue his vocation. It is the women who are the real creator and protector of man.

Henrik Ibsen also chose one of the burning topics for his play *A Doll’s House*, place of woman in society. In this choice he was more influenced by his own convictions that the growing movement for the emancipation of women. In February 1879, he actually proposed at the Scandinavian club that the women members, too, should have the power to vote. He was greatly angered when his proposal was struck down. It was at his insistence that the post of a paid librarian of the club was thrown open to women. However, it must be remembered that
the play was not written just to support or advocate feminism. Ibsen himself made it quite clear in a speech that his sympathetic attitude towards them simple because he felt that women in society were denied the rights and opportunities to grow like men.

In this play, Ibsen makes many hints about the roles of society and how the female gender was treated at that time. From this play a reader can observe what Ibsen believed about the roles of society, equality between males and females, and the idea of feminism. Ibsen portrayed the roles of society very well in this play and also shares what he believes about the equality between men and women of the time. In the beginning of the play he, again, portrayed what most households were like at the time: the man controlled everything, including the female. At the time, wives were simply chattel and were nothing more than property.

Ibsen also comments on the idea of feminism. Mrs. Christine Linde is a character that he uses to show that women can do things without a man. After Mrs. Linde was widowed, she took care of her dying mother and young brothers. It was because of her that her mother's last years of life were quite easy and her brothers would have a bright future. Nora, of course, is the other character Ibsen uses to show his idea of feminism. Nora first appears naïve and childish, yet later she musters up the courage to leave her home, her husband, and her children. Ibsen shows that if she can leave Torvald, her husband, then women of the time could leave their unhappy or abusive marriages.

Through this play Ibsen presents what he thinks about men and women's role in society, equality between genders, and feminism. "A Doll's House" is truly a modern classic and will be held as a model for women's rights for years to come.

In Indian society, the conditions of women are worst. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) in his works raised the different problems which women have to face. His genius manifested itself in the literary sky of Bengal in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Born in one of the most gifted and enlightened families of the time, he began writing in Bharati, a periodical from the house of Tagore, in 1877. This was the beginning of an amazingly active literary
career, which culminated with the Nobel Prize for his *Gitanjali*, a collection of religious poems.

Tagore was very much disturbed by one of the major evils of the society that is dowry and its tragic effects. The torture which is given to the daughters of poor and insolvent fathers in their in-laws’ houses often resulted in young brides’ death. Tagore wrote, “I have seen…the unredeemed animosity of the mother against the daughter-in-law…the picture of the in-laws’ house with all the control vested in the redoubtable father-in-law and the sharp-tongued mother-in-law operating the machine of torture.” (qtd. in Santosh Chakrabarti, p. 92)

In the story “Profit and Loss”, he exposed the evil effects of ‘dowry system’ which a bride has to face. Though Tagore presents the solution for this problem through the character of Dy. Magistrate who refuses to obey his elders and marries Nirupma without taking a single paisa of dowry, but the grooms like Dy. Magistrate are quite less in numbers. Nirupama has to suffer a lot in her in-law’s house:

She (Nirupama) shuts herself into her room and wept — a daily penance for the insults heaped on her family. Her mother-in-laws’ assaults were especially vicious. If anyone said, ‘How pretty the girl is – it’s a pleasure to look at her,’ she would burst out, ‘Pretty indeed! Pretty as the family she came from!’ Even her food and clothing were neglected. If kind neighbour expressed concern, her mother-in-law would say, ‘She has more than enough,’— implying that if the girl’s father had paid full price she would have receive full care. Everyone treated her as if she had no rights in the house hold, and had entered it by deceit.

(P. 49)

Nirupama’s sense of self-respect is aroused when her father brings money to give her in-laws. She says to her father,

‘If you give a single paisa more to my father-in-law, I swear solemnly you will never see me again.’

Her father replies, ‘What are you saying child?’ ‘If I don’t pay the money, the shame will be forever on my head—and it will be your shame too.’

Nirupama says, ‘Do you think I have no honour? Do you think I am just a money-bag, the more money in it the higher my value? No, father, don’t shame me by paying this money. My husband doesn’t want it anyway.’
The members of society encourage this greedy attitude of father-in-laws like Raybahadur. No doubt Nirupama dies, but not before raising her voice of protest; though her protest does not bring any justice to her because after her death, her mother-in-law writes to her son about his second marriage which will fetch a dowry of twenty thousand rupees, cash down.

Santosh Chakrabarti stated that it “left a deep impression on his mind. Sasurbari is synonymous with prison. Hence in the very insipient stage of his writing short stories he draws a lucid picture of torture and death in the in-laws’ house of a girl whose indigent father fails to provide sufficient dowry for her daughter. Denapaona is a saga not of Nirupama’s woes alone, but of the thousand of such hapless girls whose fathers fail to meet the rapacious demands of their in-laws at the time of, and after their marriage.” (Santosh Chakrabarti, p.92)

He was totally against the differences which were on the basis of sex. In all areas of life he advocated equality for men and women. To him, husband-wife relationship is sacred and everyone should respect it. He said that the social organisation of India largely contributed to the freedom from narrowness and intolerance which distinguishes the Hindu religion, a phenomenon which astonished the Europeans who with less jarring elements, have struggled for ages to establish peace and harmony among them.

The ‘Sati’ practice of widows accompanying the bodies of their husbands to be burnt on the same funeral pyre with them was a common practice in Rajasthan and Bengal. After a long struggle by Raja Ram Mohan Rai to stop it, it was finally banned in 1829. This custom of ‘Sati’ is raised by Tagore in “Mahamaya”. The protagonist in the story, Mahamaya, had been put in her husband’s pyre with tied hands and legs but it was her fate that saved her from death. However, it became impossible for her to live with that burnt face.

The feministic concerns in Tagore’s stories are very obvious. He has revealed the intellectual and sensitive qualities which lie latent in women, unexplored and unappreciated. According to him a woman is not a mere embellishment of the household but also has an independent entity. To specify the essential nature of a woman’s functions he exemplified, “a woman functions passively, subterraneous, like the roots of a tree, while man’s fulfillment consists in spreading himself out like the branches through growth, adventure, activity.” (qtd. Singita
Gupta, p.13) He said, “Woman is so well saddled by nature with qualities which man lacks like humility, restraint and self abnegation.” (qtd. Singita Gupta, p.13)

He has created in the twilight years of his life the true modern woman – in fact a parallel to the New Woman of Shaw – in Sohini in the story named “Laboratory”. She is an independent woman who believes in women’s empowerment and is not averse to sexual plurality by virtue of her sexual freedom and yet can stake her life for saving her husband’s Laboratory. That is, by uniting idealism and individualism, she is Tagore’s ideal woman.

Although feminist activist are providing their best effort to remove the gender difference but it is not such easy task. Modern feminist science is based on the view that many differences between the sexes are based on socially constructed gender identities rather than on biological sex differences.

This evil of ‘gender difference’ has many adverse effects on society. Husbands think that their wives are their property. They do not take them as their soul-mate. Men of society think that widows have no right to live and force them to be ‘Sati’ in the pyre of their dead husbands.

Tagore shows the strained relationship between husband and wife in the story “Punishment”. He presents a glaring problem regarding a rash decision which a husband has taken against his wife. The story revolves round the decision in which Chidam accuses Chandra, his wife, for the murder of his sister-in-law. The reality is quite different; Chandra has not murdered Radha, her sister-in-law, it is Dukhiram, Radha’s husband who has murdered her. But when Ramlochan, a neighbour reaches their house and calls for Dukhiram, Chidam quickly comes down from the verandah into the yard, and is unable to think what to do. He tells Ramlochan that Chandra struck at Radha’s head with a farm knife and the latter died.

William Radice states that when immediate danger threatens, it is hard to think of other dangers. Chidam’s only idea was to escape from the terrible truth — he forgot that a lie can be even more terrible. Chidam asked Ramlochan how he could save his wife. Ramlochan advised him to say that his brother had killed his wife; there was a quarrel between them and the husband killed the wife, which was true. But Chidam’s reply at this suggestion was very disturbing for Radha.
He said, “If I lose my wife I can get another, but if my brother is hanged, how can I replace him?” (P. 128)

In the story Tagore wants to make it clear that one should speak only, after weighing both sides of the coin. In a hurry Chidam puts the blame of murder on Chandra without thinking about its results. In laying the blame on his wife, he has not seen that in trying to save his brother from death, he is preparing the noose for his own wife. In villages or interiors, women have to face such kind of problems even today, where the husbands look at their wives only as an object for use not a soul-mate or life-partner.

The evil of the dowry system is deeply embedded Rabindranath’s heart; he makes it a subject matter for many of his stories. Santosh Chakrabarati writes:

> The dowry system with its ugly offshoots handed down from a feudalistic past so deeply convulsed Rabindranath’s mind that in a story called *Aparichita* (The Unknown Women). He unravels the nakedness of a feudalistic mind set which does not baulk at robbing the sacramental bond of marriage of all its decency and dignity. The picture of the bridegroom’s maternal uncle weighing and testing the purity of the bride’s ornaments points to an ugly relic of the feudalistic marriage system in which the bride is looked upon as nothing more than a money fetching instruments. The brake-down of so many marriages at the ceremony itself because of non-fulfillment of dowry commitments is not rare even today. But side by side with this picture of ugliness Rabindranath presents another picture — that of self-dignity first on the part of the bride’s father, Sambhunath Sen who refuses to give his daughter in marriage to a member of such a mean-minded family, saying, ‘I can not give my daughter in marriage to a family the members of which think that I have stolen my daughter’s ornaments,’ and secondly, on the part of the bride, Kalyani, who remains a life long spinster by way of protest against such an ugly insult.

Another story of this kind named is “Yagneswar’s Ceremony” in which the members of the bridegroom’s party think that they have the authority to do whatever they wish. They waste *chhana* which is supplied by Yagneswar to the members of bridegroom’s party because the food which is cooked for them is ruined in the rains. But the story
does not end on this ugly note; for soon the groom, Bibhuti comes forward to protest and distributes the chhana himself. He says emotionally to his father as to what kind of behaviour is this, and requests him to sit down to eat and in this way the chhana begins to reach where it should be.

At the time of matrimony the parents of bridegroom treat bride as a thing not as a human being. They expect for a better bidder. If a lady is not able to give birth to a male child then the husband forsake her and get married for many times without thinking about his ability to produce a son. Parents think that they should give better education to son not to their daughters because finally the daughters have to look after the house and to perform household chores.

Through their literary works, writers have conveyed a very important social message that one needs to have a broad outlook and also have the capacity to change and adopt with changing situations. This method can only help us in removing the evil of ‘Gender Inequality’. There is a need of new kind of institutions, incorporating new norms and rules that support equal and just relation between women and men. It is surprising that in spite of so many laws, women still continue to live under stress and strain. To ensure equality of status for women we still have miles to go.

**Works cited**


SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND OTHER DETAILS

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