

RE-MARKINGS

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Henry David Thoreau

David Antin

Tughlaq

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S.T. Coleridge

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Jainendra Kumar

Taslina Nasreen

Mark Twain

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Effective Communication

Artist-Novels

Technology & Dystopia

&

Special Section on

Communalism

**CHIEF EDITOR : NIBIR K. GHOSH
EDITOR : A. KARUNAKER**

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Re-Markings, a biannual journal of English Letters aims at providing a healthy forum for scholarly and authoritative views on broad socio-political and cultural issues of human import as evidenced in literature, art, television, cinema and journalism with special emphasis on New Literatures in English including translations and creative excursions

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EDITORIAL

“Come September!” The epithet easily helps one to joyfully recall from down memory lane that lilting tune from Billy Vauhn and His Orchestra which set the hearts and feet of the young and the old alike dancing with happiness and cheer. All that seems long ago. 11 September, 2001 changed all that. The catastrophe that reduced the mighty twin towers of the World Trade Centre to mere fragments of etherised memory in the twinkling of an eye showed the seamy side of inhuman ingenuity to which even the sky seems no limit. April is no longer ‘the cruellest month’. September has forged ahead with its dead weight of ‘broken images’ spilled the world over. In an age of globalization nothing can remain neutral. Even terrorism has turned global.

In a world already beleaguered with fanaticism and violence where the emphasis is on the adage: ‘good fences make good neighbours’ and where instant justifications are rendered in the name of either justice or counter-revolutionary retaliation, there must be those countless mortals who would like to rise and proclaim: ‘Something there is that doesn’t love a wall, / that wants it down’. Such mortals, however, prefer to remain inert and waiting, like the ‘winged seeds’ in Shelley’s ode, for the clarion call of the West Wind to awaken them from their slumber.

Nearly two centuries ago, Shelley, in a spirit of intense idealism had referred to the poets as “the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present;” and went on to call them “the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (‘A Defence of Poetry’). In our own time, another poet-prophet, W.H. Auden, disillusioned with the inefficacy of his poetic beliefs to make the world a better place to live in, stated in a spirit of calm resignation, “Poetry makes nothing happen...it survives,/ A way of happening, a mouth.” (‘In Memory of W.B. Yeats’). Both seem to be extreme viewpoints. For global calamities and cataclysms require to be addressed not from the narrow confines of ideas and ideologies but

from the vantage point of the healing fountain of human compassion which literature alone can make perennial. The power of art, like the power of the West Wind, to awaken, motivate and inspire people, springs from the mind and soul of those sensitive mortals who have reflected in a spirit of calm contemplation on the need to strike a perfect poise between external conflict and inward peace. All this seemed, undoubtedly, a mere idealistic notion until very recently when I had the sheer fortune of discussing this dichotomy--related to the role and function of art and artists in the context of the contemporary world--with one of the most persuasive voices in Afro-American writing today i.e. Charles Richard Johnson. I came across a statement by him in the 'Foreword' to his epoch-making book *Being and Race* (1988) : "I see taking form on the horizon of contemporary practice, a fiction of increasing artistic and intellectual generosity, one that enables us as a people—as a culture—to move from narrow complaint to broad celebration."

I really wondered how a writer, with four centuries of slavery embedded in his consciousness, could actually make his creativity move from 'narrow complaint to broad celebration'. Slightly apprehensive of his reaction, I nevertheless mustered the courage to write and ask him what he meant by the above statement. His prompt response (the text of which is printed on the back cover of the present issue of *Re-Markings*) sheds ample light on how the 'winged seeds' that lie dormant for ages can evolve into a process of continual renewal despite apocalypses. In sharing with the readers and friends of *Re-Markings* what the magnanimous Charles Johnson has so unhesitatingly shared with me, I feel optimistic that the lovers of sweetness and light will not dread the arrival of another September.

Nibir K. Ghosh
Chief Editor

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THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL
AS
AN AMERICAN EXPRESSIONISTIC HISTORY PLAY

S. Ramaswamy

Waldo: Henry! Henry! What are you doing in jail?

Henry: Waldo! What are you doing out of jail?
(p.73)

In *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*,¹ the theme of an actual American historical fact has been wedded to the expressionistic technique as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* combines a realistic theme of the exploration of the 'American Dream' to the Expressionistic technique in production. The historical fact of Thoreau spending a night in jail -- an unprecedented act of protest of the most famous event of Civil Disobedience in American history which influenced people like Tolstoy in Russia and Mahatma Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King, Jr. in his own native America -- is transcended, transmuted and transcreated into a theatre experience that is 'rich and strange'. While the characters and the historical background are authentic, the technique of presentation goes beyond the modes of Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and adopts Expressionism as the Natural Medium for the presentation of 'the philosopher of Walden Pond.' As the authors of the play, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee have themselves said in the "Production Notes from the Playwrights" :

For your production style, be guided by Thoreau's own advice : "Simplify !" The more you can omit physically, the more your audience will be called on to contribute in imagination. This play is more than the ruminating of one man in one place in one night.

We are not tied down to “flashback” or reminiscence. All the people of the play, including the audience, should be encouraged to partake in a banquet of imagining. It is eminently Thoreauvian that everyone should bring to --- and take from — the play something uniquely his own (pp.113-114).

This makes it clear why the expressionistic technique has been adopted by the playwrights. There is a perfect linking up of the musical element that lends an additional dimension in this regard. The motto for the play is chosen from what Henry David Thoreau himself had said :

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured, or far away (p.v.).

The last stage direction reads :

From a distance, he hears an eccentric, non-military drummer.

He moves into Concord Square ablaze with morning light. Suddenly the drumbeat comes from a different direction, growing in volume. It is like thunder all around him.

His eyes follow the arc of the sky. He seems to grow in stature, lifted and strengthened by a greater challenge.

He waves to Bailey, who waves back warmly from the cell window.

With determination, Henry leaps from the stage and strides up the aisle of the theatre to the sound of his own different drummer.

No curtain falls. The lights do not fade, but grow brighter... and as the audience leaves the theatre, Henry’s distinctive and irregular drum cadence builds and resounds (pp.110-111).

The use of the sound of the drum, though it is different from the sound of the tom-tom in Eugene O’Neill’s *Emperor Jones*, reveals the use of extra-literary dimension to enhance the meaning of the play. It may also be recalled

that Tennessee Williams uses two kinds of music to evoke two different kinds of characters, Blanche du Bois and Stanley Kowalsky in his *A Streetcar Named Desire* --i.e. the use of Varsouviana Polka and New Orleans Jazz. As a part of the expressionistic technique, a symbolic gesture is also used as is seen in the following stage direction :

But he is talking to the wind. Frustrated, he casts about for some way to reach the ears of a deaf public. He sees the dangling bell-rope, leaps up to ring it — and though he swings on it with the weight of his whole body, there is no sound whatsoever ! The Bell does not Ring! Stunned, he pulls more frantically. Nothing.

How do we make a sound? How do we break the silence? (The light falls away on the discouraged and disheartened Henry. The bell-rope vanishes in the flies. He throws himself on his cot in the cell.

The sky goes red. Henry writhes on the cot. There is a cannon blast — and the sky seems ripped apart by psychedelic splatterings of shrapnel.

A snare drum snarls a military cadence. A Drummer Boy marches on, turns smartly front. The face is Edward Emerson's. A Sergeant comes on, in the Federal uniform of the 1840's (pp.99-100).

A single image like this on the stage is worth a hundred words and it is through the presentation of such images that the play is enriched by the non-realistic mode.

The total effect of the work is to make Thoreau our contemporary. As the playwrights say in the "Introduction : The Now Thoreau" : "The man imprisoned in our play belongs more to the 1970s than to the age in which he lived" (p.vii). Again, as the playwrights say—"According to Santayana : 'Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it'. Perhaps this play will jog our memories as we relive the poetic protest of one of America's freest men." How the authors of the play have achieved their objective is chiefly explored in this essay.

At the level of the theme, 'the most famous act of Civil Disobedience in American history' took place when Thoreau refused to pay taxes to the Government, which was engaged

in the Mexican war, as he condemned the war as unjust: "a war never formally declared begun without Congressional authorization, a savage and bloody war fought to assuage the United States' territorial ambitions". This expresses itself in one of the dialogues between Waldo (Emerson) and Henry (Thoreau) :

Henry : Where are we, Waldo ?

WALDO : We are at war. I am aware of it.

HENRY : Are you aware of the reasons – slave-holders grasping for more slave territory ? More slavery and less freedom, is that what you want ?

WALDO : Henry, we must work within the framework of our laws. The end to this war -- the condition of the blacks -- this is the business of the President. And the Congress.

HENRY : Do you really believe that ? Then I guess I'm wrong. I thought you had the same disgust that I have for what the military is doing. But if it doesn't trouble you, then I must've made a mistake. (With acid sarcasm) You're right to keep still. I'll go back to the woods -- and leave you at peace with your war. (WALDO is in genuine pain. He glances at his wife) (pp.95-96).

One of the things that have been brought out very effectively in the play is the contrast between Emerson and Thoreau to highlight the fact that Emerson was basically a theoretical philosopher whereas Thoreau was a practicing one. It is brought out, for example, in the following exchange between Sam and Henry –

Sam : You think high of Dr. Emerson, don't you?

Henry : Usually.

Sam : He's paid his tax.

Henry : That's his problem. I'm not paying mine (p.68)

This is the difference which is clinched in the last lines of the first act quoted at the beginning of the essay as the motto. Emerson himself is made to be aware of the difference between himself and Thoreau when the playwrights, who

seem to be understandably on the side of Thoreau, make Emerson (Waldo) confess : “Sometimes I think I invented you, Henry. Or at least prophesied you. Because you live what I talk about. I couldn’t exist the way you do... But I admire you, Henry, I really do. You’re my walking ethic!” (p.93). This brings us to the fact that in order to bring out the essential nature and character of Thoreau, a number of witticisms are given to Henry throughout the play, one of which is particularly relevant in the context of the discussion at hand : “I don’t usually play with words. I prefer a flute” (p.87). The mention of the flute brings us to the comment on what has been termed the ‘Expressionistic’ technique of the play.

In fact, whenever Walden is mentioned, it is evoked through music, mainly through the sound of the flute being played in the background, much the same way that the flute melody is used in the famous American Expressionistic play, Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, already referred to earlier, where it is used as a counterpoint to the oppressive concrete jungle. For example, to the question of Bailey about the whereabouts of Walden, Henry replies - - “In the woods. By a pond. (the flute melody drifts in with a leafy green projection)” (p.60). Again at the end of the play “The flute melody falls away when Henry says ‘I must leave Walden” (p.110). The mention of the “leafy green projection” (p.60) reminds one of the “Screen Device” where legends and pictures are projected on the screen in Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*. Though the present play *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* is basically about Civil Disobedience, and since Thoreau’s name is inevitably associated with Walden, a number of references to Walden are found here indicating Thoreau’s love of nature and simple living. For example there is a factual statement :

There are three hundred distinct separate variety of grass, I know. I have catalogued them myself. We look down and you say, ‘That’s grass. Grass is grass’. Ridiculous. You have missed the splendid variety of the show. There’s camel grass, candy grass, cloud grass, cow-quake, mouse-barley, fox-tail, Londonlace, devil’s knitting needle, feather-top buffalo grass, timothy and barnyard grass and

clovers enough to sweeten the bellies of all the lambs since creation (p.29).

Though this description is put into the mouth of Henry to realistically sketch his character, immediately the expressionistic technique takes over and pantomime is very heavily relied on as a means of non-realistic presentation of the events. For example, right at the beginning of the play, the description of the 'Set' makes this perfectly clear :

Center is the skeletal suggestion of a prison cell : two crude cots, a chair, a wooden box which serves as a clothes locker. An imaginary window downstage looks out on Concord Square.

A thrust extends forward, not part of the cell — nor are the playing areas at either side. The cell itself is raked. The cell door, imaginary, is upstage center.

Surrounding the cell is the sky over Concord. There are night bird sounds, distant. Two men lie on the cots, motionless. Striped moonlight through the prison bars falls across HENRY, but the man on the other cot is in shadow.

Time and space are awash here (p.3).

One has to immediately notice that the 'prison cell' is 'a skeletal suggestion', the 'window downstage' is 'imaginary'. The cyclorama is used imaginatively more than once in the play and in this very first stage direction we see that 'Surrounding the cell is the sky over Concord'. Not merely is lighting used throughout the play to emphasize expressionism; 'the bird sounds' indicate that off stage voices and noises are also used to enhance the total effect of the theatre presentation. It is most significant that 'Time and space are awash here' links it with the technique used by the great American playwright Thornton Wilder in plays like *Our Town*, *Pullman Car*, *Hiawatha*, *The Happy Journey* and especially in *The Skin of our Teeth*.

The liberties that are taken with time extends to depicting the mobile concurrency of the past which is not a simple flashback like the way it is used in *The Death of a Salesman*. Just as we see Biff and Happy as adults as well as children here we see Ralph Waldo Emerson as 'The old man' (p.3) and a few minutes later we see him 'Younger and straighter'.

This age change is indicated through lighting by making Waldo on the stage move 'to a lectern where the light makes his face glow with an inner radiance' (p.6). It is an extraordinary theatre device when the stage itself is divided to indicate the difference between past and present or between the prison cell and the external world.

Gerald Weales in his fascinating essay 'Theatre without Walls' comments on the non-realistic/naturalistic technique where the 'Fourth-wall down convention of the realistic set' is the thing of the past. Here too 'the walls' have disappeared. Notice the stage direction --

The lighting fades on them and simultaneously rises on Lydian, who is seated, writing a letter. She looks up as Henry and Edward walk into the Emerson area (p.81).

To quote another example —

Slowly, Henry moves up into the area of the jail cell. The wavering pattern of light-on-water falls away. Only the long nocturnal shadows of the cell remain (p.42).

Soon, 'The light falls away on the cell. There is the projection of a stained glass window', (p.43), which indicates a church. This is made clear a little later, again, inevitably through lighting :

Henry and John leap about, laughing, as if they were a pair of nonagenarians who have been injected with "youth-juice". Then they fall into each other's arms, laughing helplessly.

The light goes black. In utter darkness, the church-bell tolls mournfully. Dimly the stained glass window of the church appears. Then a cold white spot, directly above, strikes the box which was the boat and has now been turned over to become a coffin (p.48).

The present writer does not know of any play where the sound effects are used more effectively than in Dylan Thomas's *Under Milkwood*, a 'Play for the Voices' as it has been called. It is only Eugene O'Neill who has used the expressionistic technique and the masks more effectively.

The non-realistic mode is emphasized when we find a stage direction like 'His face is Mask-like' (p.49). A lot of 'Action' on the stage is only through mime. For example ---

He pantomimes pushing the boat off; the light narrows, the background trembles with the wavering pattern of sunlight reflected from water. With no visible oars, he rows (p.35).

The best example of the use of mime in the play is the scene of plucking of the huckleberries :

With the deliberate relaxation, Henry is plucking the berries, tossing them in his hat. His ease and calm is in contrast with the boy's bounding energy. Henry seems to be choosing the precise berry at each bush -- the one which promises the best flavor...

Suddenly the running boy trips, falls -- and the whole basket of berries -- imaginary -- spills out over the ground (p.80).

Through the dramatic device of one night in prison, by means of a series of recollections of agony and ecstasy, humour and conflict of ideologies, a whole period of American history is unfolded panoramically and expressionism appears to be the only mode which would enable the playwrights to achieve this. Through the juxtaposition and telescoping of characters, the heavy reliance on pantomime, lighting, sound effects and the entire gamut of theatrical paraphernalia of contemporary theatre devices, this unique historical play has been brought into existence. It is not a 'Docu Drama' as the events, though historically true, do not conform to a documentary presentation. On the other hand, the liberty that is taken with space and time characterizes it as a unique theatre experience. No wonder, then, that *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* was presented in 'almost a hundred different productions' and at 'University Theatres' throughout the United States through the 'American Playwright Theatre' (p.IX). The superimposed expressionistic 'images that fresh images beget' in a sort of dream sequence lifts the play from narrow realism despite the time limit of one night and the place limit of the jail which otherwise could have resulted in a play with the three classical 'Unities' perfectly maintained. The play also employs the technique of 'The Plastic Theatre'

as practised by Tennessee Williams in his play *The Glass Menagerie*. This is also a 'Memory Play' and as Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, some of the characters in *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* are both in the play as well as a kind of chorus commentators on it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, (Bantam Book Published by arrangement with Hill and Wang. Inc,1973). The page numbers in parentheses refer to this edition.

²One other play based on a historical character which the present writer recollects is Connie Clark's *Emily* -- a play based on the life and work of Emily Dickinson (which was yet unpublished when this one-person play was witnessed as acted by the author and which was very meaningfully discussed with the author herself after the performance at Yale). The sheer mobility and imaginative production that is required was the reason why the plays of Tennessee Williams and Connie Clark were brought in for a comparative perspective. Jerome Lawrence was Master of Playwriting at New York University and was visiting Professor of Playwriting at Ohio State University. Robert E. Lee is on the faculty of UCLA (The Alma Mater of the present writer). The present play was naturally produced at Ohio State University, Columbus, as the University centennial play on April 21, 1970 and the initial production mating professional and academic theatre took place at UCLA during Summer and Fall of 1970.



antinomiana

K. Narayana Chandran

sometimes it can be a joke when some one says such a rural queen all arcadia hath not seen i havent figured out all the meanings of famous arcady so its impossible to say whether the tone of courtly compliment modulates into deeper strains which may seem irresponsible at first and it does to a certain extent in the most banal conversations but i havent figured that out that either a pity indeed perhaps an ultimate if cautious willingness to believe that there is an emperor and that emperor is in there clothes and all that you cant say things and go unpunished if they are wrong or worse unnoticed if you get them right when les murray coined *poemes* a word for poems that never get as far as words we can figure that out i suppose or hardly i dont know but this *eme* business has been around for quite sometime now

now it doesn't really harm to know what memefication is or at least what meme is richard dawkins of the *the selfish gene* tells us how germs of information spread across individuals to evolve gradually into collective knowledge bases a meme thus is a contagious information packet that replicates and spreads itself through human minds it acts like a virus sometimes even altering its hosts behaviour we see that dont we among some of our colleagues in the university slogans catchphrases melodies icons inventions and fashions are all typical memes all transmitted knowledge is memetic memes in other words are living information structures they exist in the shared space of human intellectual activity gossipeme? maybe i dont know memes like genes carry hereditary attributes their capacity for survival also differs some memes live longer in the academic unconscious religions cult beliefs etc are hardly memes while others like trends fashions local folkways mores perish fast of course the web is a natural medium you may intend the pun on *natural* in the mid 16th 17th

century sense for the propagation of memes with individual users surfing freely among meme nodes suspended in a unified space in the information gathering process meme strands organize along trajectories of specific interest isn't it good to know that after such knowledge and such forgetfulness? the self must wither and perhaps die at the expense of a system which must flourish and command okay now anyone who writes in this system is forbidden to entertain autonomy of the subject now what can writers and critics do with their old unrepresentable incorrect unusable tremulous selves? possibility #1 they can freely operate in that performative cyberspace in that "theatre of flamboyance" (j c herz) they may go flaming which is to say rave and rant with puffed up impunity and claim even some respectability in the name of the rose called computer-mediated communication possibility #2 they can generate their own monogrammed constructs if they so choose each ending usually with the suffix *eme* so we have *seme sememe classeme mytheme vesteme grapheme ideologeme glosseme categoreme matheme* and so on until we have a *systeme* what may that be? well simply the smallest or the minimal unit of system ha ha ha

beloit wisconsin one of the coldest days in january 1856 emerson mustve been up and awake as usual he wrote in his journal what he thought the stout illinoisians wanted hearty laugh yes just that "and shakespeare or franklin or aesop coming to illinois would say i must give wisdom a comic form and well i know to do it and he is no master who cannot vary his forms and carry his own end triumphantly through the most difficult" that we on earth with undiscording voice may rightly answer that melodious noise why do i remember such things now? i cant tell what i *can* tell you with reasonable certitude however is that i am not at all uncertain whether i am a person dreaming i am a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming i am a person pain as an end in itself it all begins i suppose as a stream of potentially chaotic input from all that we know generally as output then blending collision merger union? no im afraid no union the ideal of union forecloses its possibility we integrate union territories in our country by quota by concession that never concedes no

union absolutely none union is provoking a desire for that
 which it manages prevention memefication is the sort of
 linguistic violence against which we need to organize
 ourselves sometimes i wonder why bother

the next day morning after the holy mass we visited the
 place where st thomas is famed to have kept a picture of the
 virgin and a cross which he himself had made and
 worshipped for long this cross was sculpted on rock the
 saint is believed to have fled bleeding from the wound
 inflicted on him by brahmins the cross he embraced as he
 lay dying after the death of the saint in ad 1565 on
 december 18 tiny drops of blood spurted from this cross as
 though in evidence of this fact our malankara churches
 have since been celebrating this as a holy day
varthamana pusthakam by parammekkal
 thommakkathanar 1785

what is the question? gertrude stein dying

your mind is open its always dangerous to leave doors ajar
 david antin must talk antins talk may tell us where art and
 life intersect if only to show that all nontalk is poetry and
 the talk of today is mere prose notations for and scores of
 oral poems which indeed would make it problematic for the
 still pious believers of poems as always oral always
 spoken we are not as lucky as the euphorion of goethes
faust 2 euphorion has plunged to his death his valet
 mephisto collects the remains euphorions robe or gown
 such stuff and of course his lyre mephisto presents these
 things to the audience there is enough left over to initiate
 poets to cause guild's and artisan's envy and although I
 cannot lend the talents at least I can lend the robe what an
 emptyhanded exit for todays poet so antin had better talk
 everyones talking the phantom crowd of words fragments
 beginnings that's how or so we believe *le soleil* of
 baudelaire came into being shant we try david antin?
 poetic booty etc whos been taught to tell the truth with
 exactitude? the crowd doesn't know a woman lovely in her
 bones nor does it measure time by how a body sways
 walter benjamins baudelaire is a lot more interesting to read

sometimes than baudelaire tout court who would know otherwise if benjamin hadn't alerted us that the crowd in baudelaire is not simply the parisian assemblage of men women and children of both sexes but the crowd "imprinted on baudelaires creativity as a hidden figure"? with a thing like that lodged somewhere in your mind you wont have to be bothered for very much longer

when alls said and done what may be there to say and do? these graying locks the pursuivants of death antin must be careful though what if an indian teacher in his confidently graying years plans to offer a course seductively entitled comma sutra? what if all the comma blunders of students begin soon thereafter to get committed *not* in writing but in speech? commas injudiciously inverted are seen to enclose more than the actual words of the speaker we speak to others in snatches don't we? no one will patiently explain to us why antins is a special case that it is northrop fryes "associative rhythm" in rapid action the rapidex courses haven't yet caught it and sold it for a fortune antins according to marjorie perloff is "improvisatory talk poetry" it is to the best of her knowledge and mine "a process oriented art" in the mad midst of such uninterrupted discourse does anyone care to ask where what ends and another *watt* begins we had better not ask swiftwinged with desire to get a grave the eme generation will do overtime to find out whether antins "*is this the right place?*" is spatially or temporally constituted they have their wonderfully mowed and maintained defensive lawn of clichés antin of course is not an untutored genius who then were his tutors? if anyone asks that i may be forced to quote the only coleridge i now remember with reasonable accuracy which is does god choose idiots to convey divine truths by? in an age of incipient doubt where what ends is certainly not above doubt runons are runons they aren't runoffs

that was it he never asked me out again i knew itd end somewhat like this hes too selfish that you might expect any man his class upbringing and education to be what i hated most about him was his eyes alighting on the most inconsequential parts of my body of course hed be talking

mostly about money other people seem to be making his
not being good at such things yknow ive always observed
 him careful with *his* money though ive even liked that i
 must agree up to a point but you see how long can you
 go around with an ass a stone fox whos absolutely no
 sense of sense of what shall i call it no sense of
 anatomical reality suchnass when it comes to such things
 yknow difficult to make out are you capping the joke or
 reversing its angle? thank god i could manage to be cool
 and aloof all these days which he resented of course but
 who cares
 yknow some idiotic notion of women my age as
 damaged or demented

you don't use that accelerator *how stupid he is* try
 something else you don't understand he's not stupid in
 the ordinary sense at all he goes beyond stupid way
 beyond that makes him an interesting guy whose yawns
 more thoughtful than his premeditated sweet talk he
 shakes his rattle over the edge of chaos swings on the
 gates of corporate lowlife sits like a cute mynah in a golden
 ring parks himself well within municipal limits his arms
 wire clamp me when he kisses me in the seemingly
 interminable hush that falls all about us in such moments i
 reach for some breath and my little purse upon which his
 devout right knee has just pressed in unseemly flurry i try
 to talk him out of the next thing on his mind that makes it
 sound as if i used to drive him crazy i don't think i ever got
 round to that but he presses yknow i hum try to look
 afar our people saipeople if they get a wind of he and
 me like this yknow each of us trying to engender the
 other he hums too but it is not freedom rather isn't all
 that *about* freedom? i wonder i mean freedom when its
 cold for example to enjoy a kitten warmly on your knee? he
 doesn't know *that* freedom you see he doesn't even seem
 to know the word im afraid singed by fire assuaged by
 water no no never not like a lord not like my master
 havent i told you? at the rapiers our knees touched
 gently under the table

on sale stores in the headquarters of exploitative economies
 belong to a twilight zone where art meets commerce thats

where window dressers love to frolic and mess about with mannequins stuffed rats q-tips feathers mountains of dry pasta broken tv sets papier-mâché soda cans commodes and just about anything that can be draped mounted or gluegummed together into a tableau of consumer dreams window dressers of the world riff on high art and pop trends tweaking cultural references into something that they say comes closest to street theatre they are not artists never meant to be really it must be owned that with all these great excellencies they have almost as great defects and that as they have certainly striven better so they have perhaps striven worse than any others just clue me in if you think im not plain enough right they are not *artists* but who can deny their professional take on play beside that of the avant-garde art that indulges fancy fun and freakishness? as for you it costs you nothing but attention never mind if you arent persuaded by duchamps dictum “the only thing that is not art is inattention”

indulge in your own fears fear of the written word for example the word half begun well done but no further i fear in particular the small words the private parts of speech without which you cant say much sometimes nothing the unwary work through mazes and arrive before they set out i cant do that i need words all of them exactly of my choice size shape colour weight tempo temper frosty festooned feisty i try words out as they try me the one word that doesnt seem to leave me for anything in the world AND the biblical *and* and the nonbiblical joiner word of colloquial intercourse brings no two opposites into harmonious balance and yet... the other fear i have is when words come unbidden in droves courting unwanted attention to themselves as people and things and situations inopportune and unfortunate i want them all of course *but not then not there* though not useful then they are precious worth saving for gossip for committee reports fellowship applications etc worth safekeeping but where o where? i happen to have no respectable saving place for words except the good old locker room of the dictionary which is always open and thud shut by passersby it numberlocks but its alphabet key is all over the place thats shameful and wheres the fun if fun

there be? peace and goodness and jollity words are aplenty words too have audibility problems they cant it seems hear me they have occasionally told me so where were you? just about where youd sent for us at the lexis union office *you know that?* couldn't locate us? no well we were very much there nothing just is every word is process how do i process words for my business how use them and not just be their depute? bring cold reason to sit by the bed of hot fever no word is the same thing to all men all women all children a word-snack will be served between two main encyclopoedic meals swiss and colby cheese omelette with pork sausage served with hash-brown potatoes and fruit (we apologize if occasionally your choice word is missing) another fear what if the slot machine at the railway station doesn't take my word and connect me to the person if the bell doesnt ring at the readers end of the line? i don't know the word knows

outrageous plays of passion or clowning never seem to have got him anywhere poor chap he doesnt know why people do not bother to pity let alone pillory him in a country where the scamster has more creditworthiness than the decent taxpayer he expects pat and patronage poor chap to trap a joy as it flies in fact you might do your trapping only five years later when the tax raids going on next door you are not raidworthy dear not just yet unless you give up your annual habit of filing returns and emitting that beatific smile of yours good returns are no substitute for the taxes other people havent paid fall plumb down to levels ambani rose with creditable aplomb strange and sad as it may be to have to say it again swallow in one summer wallow in the heat of all summers then on what is the point? the point impales itself on the sharp point of that question lost to me at least partially poor chap his slumberous vitality fascinates me i can see him walk home alone i think i can listen to the surge of his body maybe see a little too of his left leg metamorphose into the hind leg of a bulldog a jerk? jerked puppet? ive often fancied this *profil perdu* of a man whom id perhaps let in under my sheets without qualms without dignity without tragedy ive since then abandoned this fancy but the whole things sort of aswirl in my mind the immense sweep of the landscape dwarfs the

character he is surrounded by you cant i understand
 look within without the torch of language you really cant
 nor can he what with the burned-out core of his dream
 the anonymity of the series he makes a pity ive seen him
 though admiring that woman who kept walking up with
 graceful stride on high heels talking to her secretary of
 course it looked completely inoffensive

when we have played with this toy of life someones sure to
 ask for a toy exactly like ours give me *his* life take back
 mine if you want but i want something that fellow had i
 have besides what hed never had *imagination* wont that
 be a wonderful combination and complement? when we
 have played with this toy of life no one will feel the urgency
 to tempt us anymore no time is quite propitious for false
 religions where we expect to see a saint we see a
 scoundrel the one who looms up out of the night like an
 executioner to be clever enough to get that life one must
 be stupid enough to live it when we have played with this
 toy of life another life awaits us somewhere again to be
 played like a you guessed it *toy* thats right a good life
 of its kind but was it a good kind of life? it costs youth it
 costs a number of other things as well which we are used to
 calling *dear* when we have played with this toy of life will
 someone take it back as is where is? better find that we
 need to leave it behind in any case in safe hands of
 course no one not even our dear folks will play with it
 with as much abandon as we have how well it could have
 all turned out if you had not turned against me and in
 addition you are ill-tempered myopic petty foul life of
 course justifies the metaphor the toy of life metaphor we
 live by as we play on bare hands that no antiseptic lotion
 will wash clean in order to claim cent percent germicidal
 effectiveness but the toy of life metaphor is worth another
 look if only for the relational structure of god the toy maker
 launching a product in our market a product that is so
 preset perhaps so mechanically cobbled as to work on
 its own without his or anyone elses mediation or interference
 when we have played with this toy of life we ought in other
 words to be able to appreciate at least the aptness of this
 metaphor an *aucitya* that masks the predestination of the
 tenor in the freewill of its vehicle now a short exercise

read merchandise a very short poem by a r ammons
 answer all the questions until they beat all comprehension

i will put my law in their inward parts jeremiah 31 33

génétiq ue littéraire literary genetics literary geneticists have rather expensive habits they are known to use and throw more paper and pen than say the explicators of our trade the latter are generally low-paid and are rather shabbily treated by the profession no matter how late they work in the day they are not ordinarily entitled to overtime benefits their work has chiefly to do with trimming rhetorical fat from large chunks of meaty prose and verse and portioning out medium sized pieces in neat packets for customers seeking ready-to-cook stuff literary geneticists claim superior knowledge of texts and writers they work in short but highly concentrated spells have phenomenal memory astounding grit and above all a heaven that doesnt usually exceed their meticulous grasp studying creation is no joke theyll tell you that no economy class tickets for them by analyzing the variants the revisions the substitutions within and between versions of the mss the literary geneticists usually account for the actual process that a writers work with language has taken ask them if they would direct their superior skills to study our towns graffiti works of visual art catastrophes of talent that stare at you and at which you stare sometimes with considerable embarrassment put them in exhibition cases how would they serve to organize our perceptions? hans walter gabler edited jj's *ulysses* and called it "the corrected text" gabler is famed to have reconstructed the authors intentions from an array of typed and handwritten mss rather than from a master "copy text" of course you cant produce corrected texts of *incorrect* graffiti can you? literary geneticists and explicators however seem agreed on the monumentality the marmoreality of the objects they examine to them unluckily is seldom vouchsafed the curious thrill of looking at pablo nerudas "useful objects in repose wheels that have rolled across long dusty distances with their enormous load of crops or ore charcoal sacks barrels baskets the hafts and handles of carpenter's tools" will books and papers

ever qualify? maternal fingers tugging gently at their ears
 textual scholars are apt to supplement reproductions with
 physical description carbon copies of typescripts printed
 copies of editions historically significant though freakish
 photocopies of either

he and i were in trouble deep trouble you may call it we
 got back rather late from the library you couldn't guess
 how ravenous both of us were at 8.30 or so neither of us
 usually fuss about the quality of what eventually gets eaten
 in summer lots of water and the three-rupee-a-glass
 sugarcane juice through the day there are special risks in
 any sexual or romantic relationship between individuals in
 inherently unequal positions the room was dark still and i
 didnt particularly care for light as a matter of fact i didnt
 mind the dark at all after a whole day of library fluorescence
 parties in such a relationship assume those risks i turned
 to see whether water in the jug on my windowsill was good
 while he left the room promising to bring some treats from
 the party across our front yard such relationships may
 undermine the real or perceived integrity of the supervision
 and evaluation provided and the trust inherent particularly in
 the student-faculty relationship i seemed edging along an
 invisible path all my sensory taps open wide i couldnt
 guess why i suddenly recalled our full-lipped library
 assistants smile of greeting the first thing in an otherwise
 uneventful morning they may moreover be less consensual
 than the individual whose position confers power believes
 the danger was immediately apparent to me but its contours
 rather stubbornly unclear were all these horrors happening
 to some other woman into whose torments ive mysteriously
 entered? the relationship is likely to be perceived in
 different ways by each of the parties to it especially in
 retrospect now tell me dear reader shall I not marry him
 but for whose patient and scholarly advice and attention I
 would never complete let alone submit my dissertation?
 that in sum is my story of spectral unfinished grief

talking is not poetry the best talk *on* a poem may be
 another poem but still not the poem talking neither explains
 nor understands but rather places a poem within a different

grammar the grammar required for explaining your experience is different from the one required for explaining the understanding of that experience the key to the poem of this kind or whatever kind is the sentence the sentence in its fragmentary halts does not tell you what to do rather it attunes you to rhythmic halts no longer *felt* fragmentary as you discover that meanings lie elsewhere so liberated from sought-and-found-meanings and relations you see the print as symbolic distance between word and word representing only the space created when the printhead loses contact with paper words come from all walks of life haltingly the sentence may be saying just that also that the words in it are not united at birth with meanings when absolutist ideas of a sentence no longer apply your mind begins to arrange and rearrange words which waysoever that best suits it that gives you more than a foot in the door of this whole business of talking/poetry where the mind is in no fear of meanings or contradictions marianne moores "poetry" inaugurates talk by offering different examples of experience and a potential readers understanding of the experience of talking about poetry moores talking theres no doubt about that in talking like that she seems to be posing and reflecting on questions such as what happens to our explanation when we read poetry in which we see animals and plants their behaviour actions conditions of existence etc? she also sees to it that a *theory* of poetry toward which her poem moves in stages does not run up against any explanatory trouble the talk of the poem is explanation *in/by* itself so it has its own grammar by habit the critics of moore translate that into another explanation almost another language in so doing are they not moving one linguistic scene into another as though the talk in the corridor has moved its venue to a large lecture hall?

there they go again the mountainous piles i dont think you think enough the object of books and magazines is to finish all thinking kargil was paper war did it ever occur to you that the south block harangued the north block three hundred and sixty five times in as many days and every word of it has been recorded? what are you talking about? a war is a war is a war it did take place id rather keep my

ideas till next sunday we are basically a simple lot and lets keep it simple shall we? one altogether neglected aspect of publishing books is the kind of reading television promotes first the poor quality of books produced in the age of television prompts readers to watch *whats on television* or reading what amounts to *printed tv*— articles on tv shows reviews of tv news and tv serials etc next come the reports of whats-soon-to-be-on-tv shows including our war with neighbours the stuff lately adapted from best selling pop fiction designed primarily for such adaptations and finally the category of celebrity books the Xfiles now in print whats already been on tv how far away from grace has our reading fallen but do tell me if as you say there was an act shouldn't there be an agent? two both daughters willy nilly i wouldnt call them exceptional as most fathers do ok prodded they do well otherwise well thats all right i dont *let* them in fact they are keen again like most kids their age i guess to learn to serve ere you learn to rule whats wrong with him? o really? i see him often come here sometimes into the meadow terribly ugly and cruel but does that matter really as long as he doesnt mess with us? of course why else? in that case i'll have to ask him to go away weve been living off this idea of success too long stripped unceremoniously of larger considerations we owe it to ourselves to say that one time too many? really? in cruddy weather blindfolded i learned to ride a bicycle and rollerskate and perilously run over rooftops flying kites exeunt

a reading relations story is just that but not *just* a story either youll understand that as we go along LOSER IN BIBLE CONTEST SOUGHT IN WINNER'S DEATH dadeville, ala a man who lost a bible-quoting contest is suspected of killing the man who beat him police said gabel taylor 38 was shot once in the face outside his apartment thursday taylor and the suspect apparently were comparing their bible knowledge outside an apartment complex each quoting different versions of the same passage the suspect retrieved his bible and realized he was wrong witnesses said "he said taylor did know more and that made him mad" the police chief terry wright quoted witnesses as saying associated press things

such as this are never meant but most things we read about are never meant to be meant theres of course the right to fail also the right of all rights to fail to see notice or take cognizance of failure begin to talk the talk of realism youll find fact and fiction constantly lying to each other and who would you believe? the fact of fiction or the fiction of fact? frankly i dont see the point of pressing either point

at the sunnyside public library there are just 3 or 4 tenfoot long poetry shelves emily dickinson was not very hard to recognize in that small crowd of amys and andys a neat edition of highschool emily dickinson caught my attention neatly edited i thought diligence in scholarship meticulous and intelligent annotation etc thumbed for-and backward to see what our editor might say if at all about emilys punctuation a long sheet of paper three neatly punched holes on the left for future filing and scrawled in pencil fell off from p131 sheer curiosity and some fascination for what I guessed was a girlish hand here goes

“Emily Dickinson

1830 born in Amherst, Mass, Dec.10 seldom left home of her father, Edward Dickinson, a lawyer —1830 Normal girlhood she was sociable and had many friends & boyfriends, and a great sense of humor —got kinda weird disposed of kittens by shoveling them into a pickle jar → wrote a few letters to TWHigginson, 1843→ essayist and editor of Atlantic Monthly. He saw her twice, in Amherst puzzled by her poetry, met her 2 times 1860 gradually became more reclusive sometimes, stayed inside her house for years at a time (granted it was a big house) hermitage wasn't a “love disappointment” nor was she an invalid

1886 died, in Amherst even when most solitary, she gave candy and fruit to children by lowering baskets out a window on a string”

no a syndrome is *not* disease im a little surprised that you entertain such notions in the 33rd year of your lordship syndrome is a pattern of symptoms pointing to a morbid

state which may or may not be caused by infectious agents
 syndrome points to or signifies the underlying disease
 processes a disease on the contrary is any deviation from
 or interruption of the normal structure or function of any part
 organ or system or combination thereof of the body that is
 manifested by a characteristic set of symptoms or signs
 whose etiology pathology and prognosis may be known or
 unknown a disease is constituted in and by these
 processes that's why diseases are *infectious* and
 communicable syndromes do not communicate until that
 fell arrest without all bail shall carry me away dhirubhai
 spoke the other day the listeners were few but i thought he
 leapt from point to point with brilliant asides and dazzling
 analogies briefly opportunity is alive and well in india as
 in most democratic countries young people he said
 ought to feel that tomorrow is theirs but they have to ask
 for it he was brilliant he combined in himself text pictures
 photos animation speech and audio content what a
 splendid keynote

small customers big deal if you come airway fortune
 googly or fly-and- play schemes are available if you do not
 win the mercedes you might still hit the tourwatch india
 play srilanka south africa play new zealand are you
 holding back too much from your readers? do hold back for
 a while but dont cheat we also pass like fireworks and
 flowers when a utilitarian object is discussed we have no
 interest in its afterlife ancient cisterns sometimes capture
 our respect well the imagination is another matter it
 struck me then and i have believed since and i believe now
 more firmly than ever that the way to resume is to resume
 and that is by beginning right now to build overhead tanks
 and sumps to store and supply water and leaving alone for
 the present all these questions about getting up a system
 with a network of pipes that will take from two to five years to
 build build the tanks and sumps fill them with water and
 have them if you can not build more than six build them
 now and build them in the most advantageous position and
 location in the vicinity and depend on the contents of those
 tanks and on flexible tubes as well as hose which we know
 we can get in abundance and can adjust to the exigencies of
 the occasion when the danger comes upon us we can

build one tank within thirty days or even less and every tank that you can so build and fill with water is a safeguard for at least a hundred feet of radius in every direction if that does not offer a practical solution to our difficulty then i do not know anything about practical affairs and so he continued for about thirty minutes with the tremulous certainty of a compass needle

and it came to passes letters of intent affidavits ruined methods of private business much of them lost in terminological viscosity christopher smart smarter than the smart set "for though he cannot fly, he is an excellent clamberer" in parental dramas i played no part nor did i feel left out entirely for what such plays are worth i may have got my share of rancour an inducement if you will to try out another life another style i ought to call these years initiatory since i fancy myself an artist of domestic strife from maid to mother her passage seemed swift and troublefree i doubt that she was ever a wife by choice freuds mother nice lady and i have sometimes played fort/da no points won no hard feelings either well the other games speak no names the realities are fled away and instead the games of the world are beshrouded with such coyness and whimsy such smirking and ogling such verbal nudging and grimacing as may well sweep someone like me into nothingness i worked and worked like the hindoo chinaman someone who worked just the same when drunk what i was good at i cant recall at the moment i was good i guess at domestic carpentry rather than the wooden things i joined or nailed up my employer began treating me as an *objet d'art* with wood the old proverb began to make sense a place for everything and everything in its place

Postscript

Antinomiana is a tribute to David Antin whose "talk poems" have sometimes remained central to theoretical discussions of contemporary American poetry and poetics. Among many assumptions of "art" and "poetry" his work for about thirty years has challenged include the proper subject of poetry;

the role of the poet in the poem; poets and their audience; voices we often designate as distinctly *poetic*; traditions of public as opposed to lyric poetry; the nature and craft of poetry etc. That Antin seldom talks about them directly in his work, or fulminates against practices and assumptions diametrically opposed to his, makes him special.

Reading Antin is like listening to someone who hasn't done the usual university courses in Poetry; one who has, for example, never been under critical tutelage of any persuasion. The traditions that feed his poetry are, therefore, far more eclectic and diverse than those that one schooled in the successive "revolutions" of American poetry might ever know: the Yiddish tales, the Sophists of 5th century Greece, Lysias or Gorgias, the troubadours and jongleurs of 12th century Europe, the Commedia dell Arte, Shakespeare, Donne, Emerson, Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin.... We are not even sure that he is writing or talking *poetry*, an impression he wouldn't mind us carrying. He would be sorry, however, if anyone imagined that they hadn't heard him *talk* — talk at length, passionately, excitedly, spiritedly, sadly, musingly, jocularly, affectionately, marvellously, engagingly, endearingly. Few poets writing today have so boldly and fascinatingly ranged through English speech with such splendid results as Antin. He had to attend to speech, he says in one of his talk pieces called "the river," because "there is no bibliographical category into which speech fits." Among the research essay/monograph, the graduate seminar, café discussion, and the poet's public reading and lecture, somewhere among the stretches of stressful descant and authorial declamation, lies a small but significant space where the poets of today can make themselves seen. All they have to do is talk. David Antin talks. If you hear that voice at close quarters, if you think that the voice you hear is genuine, which is to say, not highly or deliberately inflected to hold up a pathetic lyric persona, or to make large claims for poetry, there you may trust it. Still, if you don't mind calling it "poetry," you may do that as well. Antin wouldn't give you any such idea.

As a writer, Antin has been candid about the made-up look, feel, and effect of his talk poems collected in printed books. He is a performer of poetry with a major difference. He

doesn't read out but *talks*, rather improvises, before an invited, select audience. The reasons for this are many, some of which he gives in detail in an e-mail conversation with Charles Bernstein (http://www.centerforbookculture.org/interview_antin.html) from which I shall quote only this small bit: "Usually somebody gives me a title for a piece or I give them a title that serves as a kind of seed for the talk. I may think about this a lot or a little before I get to the occasion. I often let my mind play loosely over images and ideas evoked by the title. Sometimes something wildly digressive enters my thinking. I try not to lock myself in." There are, however, at least two important principles Antin observes in his compositions — 1. that his talk be pure improvisation, thinking-talking, talking-thinking; 2. that his talk be inspired by the sense and feel of a real audience. These principles of course have toughened Antin's stance as a talk-poet who couldn't care less if some member of the audience walked out on him because the talk was not found entertaining enough. Antin has repeatedly gone on record about his resolve not to double himself up as a stand up comedian or a talk show host.

Antinomiana is my attempt to push what I have sensed to be the literal spirit of Antin's compositions to certain limits where neither Antin nor I will be able to help each other. I have allowed the pun of my title (Greek *anti* + *nomos* = against law) to work on and off the page without quite damaging the integrity of my passages. My immediate source of inspiration (and provocation) is Antin's *what it means to be avant-garde*, a collection of 7 talk pieces (*New Directions*, 1993). I shall recommend this unusual book to all readers of my work above if only to suggest the difference/deference writing makes to speech. It is only fair on my part to add that I have not talked the passages above at a public space.



TUGHLAQ – A NIETZSCHEAN ENIGMA

Rajesh K. Sharma

“Can an ass be tragic? – To be crushed by a burden one can neither bear nor throw off? ... The case of the philosopher.” –Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols (33)

“I wish it was as easy as that. I have often thought of that myself—to give up this futile see-saw struggle and go to Mecca. Sit there by the Kaba and search there for the peace which Daulatabad hasn’t given me. What bliss! But it isn’t as easy as leaving the patient in the wilderness because there’s no cure for his disease. Don’t you see—this patient, racked by fever and crazed by the fear of the enveloping vultures, can’t be separated from me? Don’t you see that the only way I can abdicate is by killing myself? I could have done something if the vultures weren’t so close. I could have crawled forward on my knees and elbows. But what can you do when every moment you expect a beak to dig into you and tear a muscle out? What can you do?”
–Tughlaq in Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq* (196)

Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq* has Nietzsche’s venom and brilliance, and like Nietzsche he is tortured by a blocked spiritual vision. Nietzsche turned reason, and logic, inside out and exulted in the Dionysian destruction. Limits did not scare him; he often went over. Total and authentic scepticism became his norm. As a matter of critique he did muse, in *The Will to Power* (263), on the probability of a transcendental critique of knowledge and looked over the edge of the intellect, but his project of “the revaluation of all values” (which included his brilliantly dark critique of the church) neither required nor permitted him to articulate an integral spiritual vision. The risk was too heavy. The

inauthentic faith of the ill-constituted rabble could infect the reception and even the articulation of a spiritual vision. Otherwise his wholesome affirmation of life had the potential to mature into spiritual vision. The affirmation was, in fact, an incipient spiritual act.

But with Tughlaq there is no affirmation. He cannot cope with suffering and destruction. Chaos scares him. He desires a logically laid out Kingdom of Heaven in which everything is in neat and settled order according to a lucid, Apollinian logic. The inevitable, fatalistic irruption/eruption of events shatters him and drives him mad. He becomes a destroyer, a “lord of skins” as Azam describes him (211). His tenuous and inchoate spiritual vision cannot sustain the overwhelming demands of the affirmative instinct. Part lunatic and part sage, he has formidable cunning and frank self-insight but blends incalculable cruelty with sublime intellectual refinement. A gorgeous evil freak – that is what he eventually becomes.

Though ironically self-aware of his “madness” (196) and craving the other, divine madness (206), he yet ends up in despair when he cannot see beyond, or even under, the logic. Hence he strikes a bleak compromise with loneliness and madness:

Sweep your logic away into a corner, Barani, all I need now is myself and my madness—madness to prance in a field eaten bare by the scarecrow violence (219-20).

This is a cry of negation, concealed in ironic affirmation. And there is a fake ring to his declaration to the “historian” Barani: “I have a companion to share my madness now—the Omnipotent God! (*Tired*) When you pass your final judgement on me, don’t forget Him”(220).

He is tired, not refreshed and light. Not that he has not had a revelation, but it has been a personally shattering experience instead of being a transfiguring one. Indeed, he has reason to feel utterly betrayed by the inhuman irony of events. It has turned out that Aziz has been his “true disciple” since he is the one to have comprehended his “ideas and acts” most fruitfully (216). The cynical appropriation of his dreams by Aziz enacts their subversion by the other that lurks as nightmare in the heart of great dreams. His unearthly project

“to spread the Kingdom of Heaven on earth” has yielded (if a ‘historical’ link may still be posited) a hellish harvest. Yet the insistent events, with their unpredictability and illogic, fail to puncture his appropriative fantasy of history which probably no one appreciates and which only persons like Aziz comprehend in order to profitably pervert. He cannot take measure of the ineradicable chasm that must ever separate the reality of events from the unreality of subjectively projected history.

Tughlaq seeks redemption in history, hoping that he can shape it (“*History is ours to play with—ours now!*” 155). But history has never brought redemption to anyone. Instead of *being inscribed*, it tends to *inscribe*. It instrumentalizes the dreamer who wants to make it the instrument of his redemption. One can do no more than be a mere scribe of history. To be its author and architect is impossible. The Kingdom of Heaven is not made of brick and mortar but is a matter of “liv[ing]”, of “*practice*” (Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* 159). It is an “inner realit[y]” (*The Anti-Christ* 158).

Hence, when Tughlaq seeks eternity in history, he finds himself peering down the abyss of nothing:

Tell me, Barani, will my reign be nothing more than a tortured scream which will stab the night and melt away in the silence?(185).

His passion to create a secular Heaven in his kingdom is an attempt to rediscover a lost spiritual vision and to force that vision to its culmination by way of translating it into reality. The vision had broken over him like a sudden wash of rain when he was young. The gathering insanity of years, poised on the edge of another breakthrough, recalls that vision in a night of inky despair. He is silently contemplating retracing the steps to Delhi, dragging the decimated populace along once again when the memory strikes:

Nineteen. Nice age! An age when you think you can clasp the whole world in your palm like a rare diamond. I was twenty-one when I came to Daulatabad first, and built this fort. I supervised the placing of every brick in it and I said to myself, one day I shall build my own history like this, brick by brick.

One night I was standing on the ramparts of the old fort here. There was a torch near me flapping its wild wings and scattering golden feathers on everything in sight. There was a half-built gate nearby trying to contain the sky within its cleft. Suddenly something happened – as though someone had cast a spell. The torch, the gate, the fort and the sky – all melted and merged and flowed in my blood-stream with the darkness of the night. The moment shed its symbols, its questions and answers, and stood naked and calm where the stars throbbed in my veins. I was the earth, was the grass, was the smoke, was the sky. Suddenly a sentry called from far: ‘Attention! Attention!’ And to that challenge the half-burnt torch and the half-built gate fell apart.

No, young man, I don’t envy you your youth. All that you have to face and suffer is still ahead of you. Look at me. I have searched for that moment since then and here I am still searching for it. But in the last four years, I have seen only the woods clinging to the earth, heard only the howl of the wild wolves and the answering bay of street dogs (194).

The half-burnt torch and the half-built gate remain unrecovered and uncompleted. Mundanity intervenes to wrap the vision in its dull glare once the vision has been interrupted. The guard’s interruptive “Attention! Attention!” breaks the trance and returns the youthful Tughlaq to the passing instant, to the process of history. Paradoxically, and tragically, he would seek to penetrate into history and overdetermine it ahead of its happening. He would search for that transhistorical vision in his fantasy of history dissembling as prophecy. And the prophecy would, inevitably, invert itself. The historical would fatally infect *his* Kingdom of God.

His magnificent fort in Daulatabad that rises out of the landscape like a concrete metaphor of his dream has “a long passage, a big passage, coiled like an enormous hollow python inside the belly of the fort.” The Old Man says people “will be far, far happier when that python breaks out and swallows everything in sight—every man, woman, child, and beast” (193). Azam dies on the mouth of the passage, probably killed by Aziz. When this happens, Aziz and Azam

suddenly emerge as two masks of the “actor” (*The Will* 293) Tughlaq, a truth which the latter must, however painfully, come to terms with. The *event* of the passage thus brings Tughlaq to his pathetic-tragic (self-) revelation through his subsequent encounter with his other – Aziz – who has grown rich sticking to the underbelly of the “mad” Tughlaq’s great dream. The Kingdom of Heaven, in fulfilment of the Old Man’s prophecy, does “crumble from the inside” (192).

Nietzsche realized he was “born posthumously” (*Foreword, Anti-Christ* 125); Tughlaq doesn’t. Hence his impatience: “I have a long way to go. I can’t afford to crawl—I have to gallop” (164). He is incapable of playfulness in the face of events, which Nietzsche regarded as a mark of greatness:

I do not know any other way of associating with great tasks than play: as a sign of greatness, this is an essential presupposition. The least compulsion, a gloomy mien, or any harsh tone in the throat are all objections to a man; how much more against his work! (Ecce Homo 258).

Is Tughlaq the “higher type of man”, the kind visualized by Nietzsche in *The Anti-Christ* (129)? Not at all, though he appears to possess some ingredients of the type. He seems to have the “pathos of distance” that filled Nietzsche with contempt for the rabble. For instance, he is impatient with the Young Man who cannot appreciate his vision: “You don’t understand! You don’t understand! Why do you live? Why do you corrupt the air with your diseased breath?” (194). Yet there are times when he wants the rabble and himself to “melt” into each other (155). True, he is “multiple” (*The Will* 270) and cherishes his multiplicity and tells Imam-ud-din that he cannot disown the Greek, the Zoroastrian and the Buddhist in him (165), but it is significant that his heroes are Socrates, Plato, the Buddha and Zarathustra – the first three are “decadents” according to Nietzsche and the fourth one was the one who committed “the most calamitous error, morality” by “consider[ing] the fight of good and evil the very wheel in the machinery of things” (*Ecce Homo* 327-28). The decadents embodied the exhaustion of their civilizations, represented by the triumph of reason and cold logic over instinct. As for Zarathustra, since he had erred most disastrously, he alone could act to undo the error. Hence, Nietzsche had to create him anew in order to effect “the self-

overcoming of morality" (328). Obviously, Tughlaq's Zarathustra is not the Nietzschean Zarathustra.

In comparison to Nietzsche, therefore, who philosophized with a hammer to sound out the idols, Tughlaq is no better than a heroic hero-worshipper. Of Socrates, Nietzsche said that he "was the buffoon who *got himself taken seriously*" (*Twilight* 41). Of Tughlaq, one might say he is a serious dreamer who gets himself taken as a buffoon. His misfitness in his times, his self-ignorant posthumous existence is quietly metaphorised in his post-sleep disorientation at the drop of the curtain.

Nietzsche's work as well as fate might open a window on what blocks Tughlaq's spiritual vision. Thanks to his fiercely appropriative will to power, Nietzsche's scepticism did not grow on to become self-reflexive. Hence it remained shut against the probability of an authentic and openly received spiritual vision. Tughlaq, too, never returns to the innocent openness, to the "innocence of becoming" (*The Will* 299) that he experienced when he was nineteen. He appropriates the epiphany of the "melting" world as a subjective fantasy that he would impose on the world in the form of a self-enclosed transformative rational project. The appropriation, like a ball of nails ingested, paralyses him from within. In his final vegetable helplessness, therefore, he mimics Nietzsche.

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LITERATURE AND POLITICS : THE BLACK IN SAUL BELLOW'S NOVELS

T.S. Anand

*In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning
in political terms. —Thomas Mann*

These words of the great German novelist, uttered in reaction to the horrors of Nazi Germany, embody a human truth on the grandest scale, applicable to nearly all ages and periods in varying degrees. So it would be naïve to expect that a creative writer has little to do with the sordid business of politics, that he must address himself to the existential dilemmas. It has been observed in recent times that even the most dramatic fictive tale carries within itself a dialectic of the writer's own peculiar urges and dreams. Thus a writer's philosophy or vision of life is as subtly intertwined with his plots and personages as the odour of a rose. How else may we, for instance, understand a tragedy like *King Lear* which is at once a tragedy of filial ingratitude and a tragedy of Machiavellian politics. If Shakespeare's attitude towards the Jews in *The Merchant of Venice*, and the blacks in *Othello* has been the subject of much controversy, so is Saul Bellow's unflattering portrayal of blacks in his novels. Before I focus on the negative images of black characters as they have continually appeared in his novels, I think it will be pertinent to take recourse to the post-war scenario in U.S.A. when there was in most major universities an effort to educate more blacks in order to resolve the American dilemma. Despite such efforts, "the segregation of blacks was visible in the real life of the universities -- which includes separation in housing and in areas of study, particularly noticeable in the paucity of blacks in theoretical sciences and humanities."¹

Saul Bellow's fiction is not free from the politics of colour. In *Herzog* (1964)² Saul Bellow exposes his protagonist to the worst form of human depravity, ugliness and cruelty which are implicit in the four trials Herzog witnesses in the New York Courtroom. The first case concerns two Negroes engaged in a street brawl. Herzog is horrified to see the elderly injured man with bandaged head who was taken to the cellar by the attacker on the promise of providing him a drink. Instead the old black man was beaten, injured and robbed of his sixty-eight cents. The ruthless behaviour of the criminal Negro shocks Herzog and he feels as though "something terrible, inflammatory, bitter, had been grated into his blood stream and stung and burned his veins, his face, his heart" (237).

After a sketchy portrayal of two black street hoodlums, Bellow's next novel, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970)³ throws up a powerful Negro who is seen picking purses in the bus by Sammler. The Negro's face shows the effrontery of a big animal; his presence in the bus terrifies Sammler because he has reported the crime to the cops. The tall, well-built Negro follows Sammler into the lobby of his building and holds the old man against the wall with his forearm. Instead of causing Sammler any physical injury, the Negro unbuttons himself, opens his fly and takes out his penis, and concludes the "session, the lesson, the warning"(42). The shocking encounter stimulates Sammler's consciousness and he learns that the "blacks speak another language"(150), and his inference is confirmed by a newspaper report about a white kid who, when surrounded by a black gang of fourteen-year-olds, pleads with them not to shoot him, but that is what is done to him. Ultimately, when Lionel Feffer snaps the black pickpocket during the act of picking the pockets, he invites trouble for himself. With one brutal hand, the black man squeezes Feffer and with the other he snatches Feffer's camera. The murderous violence surfaces in the face of the black man as he tightens his grip round the neck of hapless Feffer. The saviour in the form of Eisen, Sammler's son-in-law, arrives. Spurred to action by Sammler, Eisen smiles, shrugs, then bloodies the black pickpocket with a bagful of his art work and separates the two. Bellow seems to imply that "Jews hardened by death camp and war can bring even black potency to earth".⁴

Bellow persists with his negative portrayal of black characters in *The Dean's December* (1982)⁵. Riggie Hines is another black character who embodies violence and pugnaciousness which are missing in Bellow's destructive women. Emotionally bankrupt, Riggie represents the brutal nihilism and perversion of sexuality: "She had the build of a boxer and a boxer's compact head. Even the way she tucked back the mannish shirt to show the tops of her breasts was pugilistic... You saw women like that in police court for scalding a man with boiling grease, or for cutting him"(49). Riggie, the black prostitute, offers no erotic allurements but merely mechanical sexual thrill shorn of emotions that make it a wholesome pleasurable act. Her sexuality is completely dehumanized through the brutal and "dirty sex momentum"(131) of the modern times as she goes around in a work shirt, wide open, and wears her jeans like a man. "She spits on the floor like a trucker and if a guy didn't pay her she'd slug him"(43). Like the Negro pickpocket, Riggie's portrayal projects her as subhuman "wild-ass savage from the Third World"(52).

Spifford Mitchell, Riggie's male counterpart, is also a black man who kidnaps Sathers, a young white house-wife, repeatedly rapes her and then locks her in his car trunk between attacks, before finally killing her. In fact, Mitchell forces Mrs. Sathers at gun point into his own car which he had bought from a Clark Street dealer just after his recent release from prison. He drives to a remote alley and assaults her sexually. "By his own testimony, this happened several times"(193). After spending a night in a motel, Mitchell leads Sathers out and locks her in the car trunk again, and then goes to attend a court hearing to answer an earlier rape charge. Towards daybreak of the second day, Mitchell lets Mrs. Sathers go. Desperately, the sexually abused woman rings several doorbells but no one lets her in. As Mrs. Sathers turns away from the fourth closed door, Mitchell pulls up and reclaims her, drives to an empty lot, shoots her in the head and covers her body with trash. The police promptly descends on Mitchell who is found cleaning out the trunk of his car and hosing out the excrements. The blacks like Riggie Hines and Spifford Mitchell scrounge, rob, fuck, drink and take drugs; "they cut and shoot each other and die young" because "they have no structure"(51).

Bellow's irrational fear of the black does not diminish even in a novella as *A Theft* (1989)⁶. In this work Bellow focuses his critical lenses on the sexual acrobatics of Frederic, a black man who is friendly with young Gina, the white governess for Clara Velde's three daughters. During Clara's absence, Gina invites Frederic and his East Harlem type buddies to Clara's drawing room where the young black men and their girl friends enact the peculiarities "like the scenes from some lewd dance movies"(61) and spray the whole house with marijuana smoke and sexual excitement.

In the final assessment it can be said that Bellow's portrayal of blacks in his fiction perpetuates the stereotype which is the hallmark of literature produced by leading white writers over a long period of time. It is indeed intriguing that in a span of over twenty five years which separates *Herzog* (1964) and *A Theft*, (1989), the fiction of Saul Bellow, the post-war living American novelist who is often hailed as a spokesman for the contemporary American society, registers no progression in the unfair portrayal of blacks. Hence Bellow's inability to draw genuine and authentic images of blacks in his fiction reflects poorly on his otherwise pious avowal of "universal connections." No doubt, the crime graph in U.S.A shows blacks involved in rape, murder, violence and drug-trafficking but the same may be said to be the case with other white communities. Surprisingly, Bellow has portrayed blacks (with the exception of Queen Willatal in *Henderson, the Rain King*) either as street hoodlums (*Herzog*) or as a violent pickpocket (*Mr. Sammler's Planet*) or prostitute, rapist and murderer as in *The Dean's December* or a drug addict as in *A Theft*. Are these the only slots for the racially and sexual abused "invisible" human beings? To me it seems to be what Dickstein calls "a paranoiac manipulation of stereotypes and racial fantasies."⁷ Therefore, Bellow's affirmation of man is suspect as he seems to have miserably failed to essay a probing leap into the psyche of his black characters.

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³Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet.* (1970); (rpt. Harmondsworth Middlesex : Penguin Books Ltd., 1977).

⁴Earl Rovit, ed. *Saul Bellow : A Collection of Critical Essays* (Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1975), p.132.

⁵Saul Bellow, *The Dean's December* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin Books Ltd., 1982).

⁶Saul Bellow, *A Theft* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin Books Ltd., 1989).

⁷Morris Dickstein, *New York Times Books Review* (October 3, 1971), p.16.



**THE GROTESQUE ART:
SOCIETY AS (MALE/FEMALE) CREATIVE BURDEN
IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICA**

Davees C.J.

1.1.0. An artist is guided in creativity not only by an every-positive desire but, side by side, by a fear of losing the object of desire to an antagonistic 'audience'. It seems, therefore, worthwhile to analyse the problematics created by the artist's awareness of society in his/her creative consciousness. This paper drawn on fourteen artist-novels (künstlerromane) of fourteen authors of the first half of the 20th century America, juxtaposes the male fictional artist with his female counterpart with regard to the creative consciousness of audience in creative process. However, the artist's attitude towards society is no more a matter of generalisation: it has to be distinctively discussed, as disparities are visibly distributed between the male and the female artists. Nevertheless, the central argument of this paper is that the society (fictionalised as 'audience' in the text) functions as a 'creative burden' in creating art in the grotesque order, though the mode of its functioning is different for the male and his female counterpart.

1.2.0. The idea of creative purgation and the artist's confrontation with society is inseparably interlinked. If writing, like a dreamwork, is done to defend oneself with regard to his/her desire, the addressee of the text is the potential adversary who works as an agent preventing the authoritative hero/heroine from possessing the respective objects of desire.

This "opponent" -- so known in A.J. Greimas's Schema (Suleiman 1983:65) -- contributes to the "triangular nature of desire" in the sense in which Lacan said, "our desire is always the desire for the other" (Maclean 1988:35). In this sense, the society/audience is a powerful force that contributes to the making of the text.

1.2.1.1 The causality of the desire-frustration of the artist protagonist in the male text lies primarily with the society by which he is rejected. The narrator-protagonist of *The Sacred Fount* is rejected by Ford Obert, Mr. Briss, Lady John, and even by Mrs. Briss who discourages him, saying "you're abused by a fine fancy" (SF: 203-204). The rejection of the artist-hero in *Martin Eden* is complete when his ladylove dismisses him, thinking that the inconsequential position of Martin would be a disgrace to her. In *Winesburg, Ohio*, all of George Willard's women are robbed off from him by a hostile society. As Mia Klein remarks, George's frustration is caused by the "struggle waged within the artist between the Collective Father (society's laws, its code, its standards, its truth) and the Spirit Father (the individual's private, independent truth, his personal god)" (Klein 1977:40). In *This Side of Paradise*, Amory Blaine's creativity is "not accepted... among the elite of the class" (TSP:50). In Faulkner's novel, *Mosquitoes*, Gordon is surrounded, by 'mosquitoes', the silly lionising art-lovers. In *Pictures of Fidelman*, the artist-hero has constant encounters with "conspirators" (PF:86). In short, the society bereaves the male artist of both his women and the recognition of his status.

1.2.1.2 At the same time, there is a counter-action from the part of the male artist-protagonist: he is equally eager to reject the audience's acceptance as unnecessary. The artist in *The Sacred Fount* doesn't show interest in the pleasure of the audience. Martin Eden dismisses "the multitude" (ME:263). Every hero realizes that it is "the awful intellectual chasm that yawned between him and his people" (SF:312). *Winesburg, Ohio* is peopled with the "frustrated individuals who cannot communicate with each other" (Stouck 1977:529). As Madelyn Hoffman remarks, Amory in *This Side of Paradise* is "bereft of any audience but (at the same time) not eager to regain one" (Hoffman 1978:183). The hero in *Pictures of Fidelman* finds his audience to be "dull-witted" (PF:157), and in *Mosquitoes*, "People are far more tolerant of artists than artists are of people" (M:270). Thus the male artist generally maintains only an aversion to the multitude.

1.2.2.1. While the artist-hero is prevented by the entire society from possessing his object of desire, namely woman, the artist-heroine is on the other hand, not rejected either by

her desire-object (children/multitude) or by the entire society but only by individual men and women who are phallogentric in conventions and expectations. The first one to be antagonistic towards the artist-heroine is the man who is unimaginative of a woman's call to creativity. Avis Dobell in *The Story of Avis* is betrayed by Philip Ostrander who makes his easy escape to the spare room whenever he feels his privacy is threatened. In *The Awakening*, Leonce Pontellier accuses Edna of neglecting her duties of a wife and mother. But, to the artist-heroine, like Alabama Beggs in *Save Me the Waltz* or Olivia May in *A Woman of Genius*, marriage is "an engulfing personal experience" (WG:123). Thus Fred Ottenberg's romance becomes a nuisance to Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark*. Some of the men in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* are symbol(s) of isolation or they are intolerable hypocrites as Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* recognizes.

1.2.2.2. The artist-heroine is also rejected and betrayed by the male-centered women or foils as they are generically known. These foils are women who have no sense of character but such as they reflect from men. Coy Bishop in *The Story of Avis*, Adile Ratignole in *The Awakening*, Pauline Mills in *A Woman of Genius*, Lily Fisher in *The Song of the Lark*, Joan in *Save Me the Waltz*, Baby Wilson in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Betsy and Doreen in *The Bell Jar* add to the causality of desire-frustration in the artist-heroines. At the same time the female artist is encouraged in her career by many men and women who try to understand and accept her position. The artist-heroine's fear of the phallogentric men, male-centered women and of heterosexual love denotes that she is desirous of a larger audience, the multitude. In other words, the artist-heroine measures the degree of her success by the crowd's acceptance of her art and not by any money-earning capacity which in the case of the artist-hero, is the chief criterion of success in a patriarchal society. It is this "absolute surrender... [with] no division of labor possible in her economy" (SA:69) that she is deprived of by a hostile, male-centered audience and biological motherhood.

1.3.0 The desire-frustration of the artist brings about two kinds of responses -- unconscious and self-conscious. In the mimetic or unconscious response both the male and the

female artist-protagonists suffer a division of mind (madness) and body (death/suicide).

1.3.1.1. Thus, Eugene Witla of *The "Genius"* becomes a 'Hamlet in madness', Fidelman, Amory and George Willard wish for suicide, Gordon in *Mosquitoes* experiments with his death, the narrator-protagonist in *The Sacred Fount* becomes depleted while Martin Eden actually commits suicide. One could also note that his is a guilty alternative, as the artist-hero's Oedipal guilt of sin, wrong-doing and fear of punishment are invariably associated with his sense of doom.

1.3.2.1 In the unconscious or mimetic response to the desire-frustration, the artist-heroine too becomes mad/suicidal. Esther Greenwood of *The Bell Jar* is clinically treated for her madness and attempt of suicide. Avis Dobell and Alabama Beggs wish for death. Olivia May in *A Woman of Genius*, Mick Kelly in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and Thea in *The Song of the Lark* project their mad/suicidal tendencies on others while Edna of *The Awakening* actually commits suicide. However as guilt is not visible in female madness or suicide, it appears that her mimetic response to desire-frustration is almost a wilful or 'pleasurable' alternative.

1.4.0. The artist's confrontation with society and the subsequent desire-frustration also induces a second kind of response, which can be viewed as 'textual' or self-conscious. It is when the experience of desire-frustration is self-consciously perceived by the artist that society becomes a creative propellant in creative process. However, the aesthetic vision generated in this manner is grotesque in form. It shall also be noted that the grotesque, which is generally defined as "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" (Thomson 1972:27), subsumes under it a variety of modes such as the absurd, the bizarre, the macabre, caricature, parody, satire, irony and the comic, and such affectations like abnormality, the terrifying and disharmony.

1.4.1.1. In *Martin Eden*, life is viewed as "grotesque.... absurd, unreal and impossible" (ME:141) while in *The "Genius"* life is not anything more than "the accidents, of supreme failure and supreme success" (G:730). Amory

Blaine in *This Side of Paradise* views life as "a grotesque blending of desires" (TSP.278), while the grotesque is "almost beautiful" in *Winesburg, Ohio* (page 3). Most of the artist-heroes find themselves threatened by depletion -- a major theme in *The Sacred Fount*. They perceive their desire-object (viz. woman) to be in the tragic or as a blurred brushwork (SF), a grotesque figure (ME and TSP) and a symbol of unattainable desire (G). In addition, all of them create art-works (paintings, stories, sculpture or poems) of the corresponding nature, because they believe along with the artist-hero in *Mosquitoes* that, "you don't commit suicide because you are disappointed in love. You write a book ... and so take revenge (for the) thwarted desires"(M:190-191).

1.4.2.1 In the self-conscious acceptance of desire-frustration, the artist-heroine views the grotesque situation as a part of her(frustrated) development or as a feature of the sick world around her. The artist-heroine in *The Story of Avis* compares her life to the fate of a sparrow at the deadly reflector of the lighthouse, while, to the heroine in *The Awakening*, it is "a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream" (A:34). Through the grotesque or "the aesthetic of pain" (Rubin, Jr. 1977:270) the artist-heroine in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is empowered to "battle the society that demands of her so unfair a sacrifice" (McDowell 1980:39-40). Even suicide, for the heroine, is a "sensuous close embrace" (A:124) or one that is "sparkling all about me like blue and green and yellow semiprecious stones" (BJ:181). The artist-heroines in *The Story of Avis* and *Save Me the Waltz* also try to survive their desire-frustration by self-consciously bequeathing their artistic ambition to their daughters. All of them, like the heroine in *A Woman of Genius*, transform the "inharmonies" in life into the "pages of my book" (WG:47, 504) or like the heroine in *The Song of the Lark*, make adequate use of "creative hate" (SL:680) in order to create corresponding art-works.

1.5.0. Though the society, as a fictional category, has to be perceived from the standpoint of its assimilation into the text through the hero's/heroine's sexual-textual desire, the critics sexually polarize the audience-pleasure into male and female, with the typical bias in polemical practice. The issue of audience-pleasure first views the audience as male and

female separately and then allocates the pleasure to either of them in a gesture of exclusiveness. Another issue related to the audience-pleasure is the question of art as purgation or creative 'pain'. However, in a male-centered polemic, what is considered a normal creation of a purgating agent viz., the art-work, is generally interpreted to be a mark of perversion and abnormality when a female artist gains access to it. However, an unbiased reading of the artist novels may enable one to discern that the society/audience is a powerful creative constriction in the male and female artists and that the artist ---- whether hero or heroine ---- survives a hostile society through artistic formulations of the grotesque situation into an aesthetic vision and/or corresponding art-works, though the difference between the two sexes shall not be left unnoticed.

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**AN ANATOMY OF POETRY:
CONCEPTION, BIRTH AND DEATH
WITH REFERENCE TO *THE ANCIENT MARINER*,
KUBLA KHAN AND *ODE TO DEJECTION***

Shernavaz Buhariwala

Chronologically considered, *The Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan* and *Ode to Dejection*, make up a trilogy on the process of poetry. (*The Ancient Mariner* being concerned with the making of a poetic sensibility, *Kubla Khan* with the actual birth and growth of poetry and the *Dejection Ode* with its death). I am not implying that Coleridge commenced with a deliberate plan. But there can be no denying that his poetry is governed by certain concepts - most remarkably by the concept of imagination, of which he provides a searching scrutiny in his marvelous critique, *Biographia Literaria*. From hindsight, it is therefore possible to deduce such a design, and to follow the journey of his vision from conception to death.

All creation is an act of worship, and every pioneer, as Shelley observed, is a poet. For the pioneer, or the Mariner, sallies forth to undiscovered lands to seize the meaning and the mystery. In so doing, he partakes of the divine, and the spiritual and the imaginative achieve an identity. Reality is much more than actuality. Imagination transcends the visible and tangible in search of answers to our existential queries. To make the adventure intelligible and awe-inspiring, he must present it through a suitably otherworldly agency. (The supernatural being considered not just as atmosphere or accessory, but as an indication of a reality that is ultimately a mystery). Coleridge utilised the supernatural for subsistence at various levels. It gave to his narrative a kind of wonder and witchery, but more importantly, it gave to his concept an undoubted sublimity. If reality is transcendent, it is also immanent, and more tantalisingly subterranean. Beneath layers of consciousness are hid those primal affections, and

shadowy recollections. Under the stimulus of experience, the genii is released with unmanageable repercussions. The supernal and the surreal - the light and the dark, make up the diurnal round of his art. The first is approached by his soaring imagination, the second by his psychic insights. Consequently, the imagery of darkness and light recurs often. And the Mariner becomes an archetypal figure, retaining the atavism of the past, with an acquired, if compulsive initiation. The journey to the South Pole with its variegated vegetation, makes an authentic and enthralling copy. But when viewed through the fabric of his vision, the South Pole represents the very extremity of human possibility. To gain the ultimate experience, one has to go through preliminary ones, where the elemental Furies striving for supremacy, wreak havoc on their quarry. These have to be accommodated and subdued, for the dark before, and the light after, play an equal part in the poet's redemptive plan. Thus is a poet made - what if he hasn't written a poem as yet? Enough that he has seen the vision. Consequently my interpretation of *The Ancient Mariner* is concerned with this preliminary preparation.

Unlike Eliot, Coleridge did not propound a Christian poetics. Though *The Ancient Mariner* draws from the life of Christ, the scriptural injunction is not meant to be a lesson in theology, but only a spiritual analogy. Though nominally a Unitarian, Coleridge was essentially a Pantheist. And philosophers like Spinoza, Hartley and Berkeley, appealed powerfully to his speculative imagination. The mariner proceeds to enlightenment via the religious route, but the outcome is entirely secular. The knowledge gained is not denominational, but universal. There is duality but no dichotomy in the procedure set out. For the critical moments in the life of Christ, such as the Temptation, Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection, admit of a poetic interpretation. When Jesus started sweating blood in the garden of Gethsemane, he had empathised completely with suffering humanity. And the Crucifixion is a consummate pledge of that Everlasting Mercy. So does a poet empathise with the images he presents. So is Life resurrected in Art as a kind of Easter celebration. As for Sin, and the necessity of purgation enjoined by Christianity, we have an affirmation of it, in the Catharsis, which Tragedy sits out to achieve.

The Ancient Mariner is divided into seven parts. The first part closes with the shooting of the Albatross, the second with the hanging of the Albatross from the neck of the mariner, the third, with the curse of the fellow mariners and their subsequent departure. The fourth section ends with the falling of the Albatross into the Sea, the fifth with a double plea, one for punishment and the other for pardon. The sixth with an assurance of prayers in the pattern of Lent, and finally with the wedding guest "stunned and forlorn, a sadder and a wiser man" who greets the morrow morn. The poem begins with a reference to a marriage feast, from where a guest has been forcibly detained. He is obviously not the bridegroom, but a very close and important functionary - presumably the best man. His necessary participation in the ceremony and celebration invests the occasion with religious overtones. For the marriage feast is a social extension of the ceremony of "communion", the marriage of body and spirit evoked by the presence of Christ, (This is my Body and my Blood) in which the congregation is invited to partake. The "Mass" being but a confirmation of the collective responsibility, not unlike the legacy of the original sin, which it is mankind's duty to expiate. The interrupted wedding feast by an important wedding guest is, therefore, a pointer to an infirmity, which subsequent experiences are made to correct and counter.

The persons in the scenario come curiously in pairs - converse but complementary. We have the ancient mariner and the contemporary guest. The dissenting chorus and the approving one. ("Ah wretch! Said they, the bird the bird to slay / that made the breeze to blow" then 'twas right said they, such birds to slay / that bring the fog and mist". Then come the spectral figures of "Death" and "Life in Death". They dice for the ship's crew and "Life in Death" wins the ancient mariner. All around are the fellow mariners who serve initially as the Furies and are changed subsequently into the Eumenides. Two forms of punishment are suggested - one righteous and punitive, the other humane and forgiving. The sixth part sees the arrival of the Pilot and the Pilot's boy, to escort the mariner back to the shore. Then the delivered mariner is seen in the company of the shriving hermit, who is expected to wash away the Albatross' blood. The duet finally concludes with the wedding guest imbibing the spirit of the ancient mariner to achieve a union of body

and soul, of the actual and the imaginative, of the personal and the universal for which the wedding reception will be an appropriate celebration.

The movement of figures and images in couples is a stylized illustration of point and counter point; to highlight the debate in the macrocosm and microcosm as well. Every story has another side, every action a reaction. So when an event is viewed through analogical mirrors, the perspective changes and subjectivity is subdued. The purpose of imagination being the unassailable one of achieving unity and shedding singularity. The fellow mariners, two hundred in number, are *not* actually involved in the slaying of the bird. But they do provide a social context in which the outcome of the individual act is demonstrated and assessed. Whether the Albatross was good or evil depends on the way you regard it. In the stated condition of the poem, it seems a good omen, for it released a wind causing the fastened boat to sail. But a section of the mariners believed "Twas right such birds to slay as bring the fog and mist", raising a hypothetical surmise that it could have brought a fog, just as it brought a breeze.

Every potential is a potential for good or evil. The mariner's flat statement "With my cross bow I shot the Albatross", indicates a thoughtless arbitrary act. Any potential, be it good or evil, has got to go through a testing or purging process, before it can take its place among the eternal verities. It cannot be *shot away* mindlessly as the mariner did the Albatross. And so he is inflicted with the Cross. The analogy with Christ gives an objective sanction to an experience which would otherwise have remained subjective. If the mariner is an archetypal figure, as indicated by his "long gray beard" and "glittering eye", then his fellow mariners, representing the human race, infirm but resilient, must engage like him in the purgatorial process. This they do in a surreal way. They certainly have an objective presence. However they change from accusers to ministers, as the mariner passes the stations of the Cross, indicating that they are within him, as well. Evil like good is both ambient and inherent. The torture of his imprisonment and the felicity that accompanies his release, are presented by Coleridge with exquisite authenticity:

*I closed my lids and kept them close
And the balls like pulses beat
For the sky and the sea and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.*

When the Cross is removed, freedom comes:

*I moved and could not feel my limbs
I was so light -- almost
I thought that I had died in sleep
And was a blessed ghost.*

Awareness must come from within. Punitive punishment overlooks grace, and therefore can have no place in the poetic scheme. It has to be reformatory. Significantly when the spectre of 'Death' and "Life in Death" come to claim the Mariner, it is "Life in Death" who wins. For Death would mean capital punishment and consequently nihilism, while "Life in Death" suggests hope of life, made possible by faith.

The mariner's rehabilitation starts with the dropping of the Albatross from his neck, following his ecstatic encounter with the water snakes. Thereafter his journey is accomplished in four stages – each culminating in an orgasmic release. The first finds the ship moving merrily on its own, without wind or wave to propel it. A strange sight, and yet not strange, if you believe that the ship is only symbolic – a vessel, as the body is of the spirit. When inner resources are discovered, no external stimulus is required. Here is a celebration of independence, achieved through grace. But the emancipation, is not complete; the persecution continues:

*The pang, the curse with which they died
Had never passed away
I could not draw my eyes from their's
Nor turn them up to pray.
...And now the spell was snapt...*

The second release finds the Mariner returning to his native shores. He had never really left them. His imagination stretched to the limit (the south pole) involving the horrific and the beatific, comes back to its starting point. The Ingenue becomes an Initiate and finds each common sight appalled in celestial light:

*Oh dream of joy, is this indeed
The light house top I see*

*Is this the hill? Is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?*

As he approaches home, the pilot and the pilot's boy rise to receive him. And a third cataclysm occurs. The ship nosedives, and the mariner is afloat. How could it be otherwise? For in the cosmic scheme, the body (ship) is a transient commodity, which dissolves to release that which motivates it. The mariner, once an individual person, is now a universal phenomenon. If however, these eternal truths are to reach humanity, they have to be embodied. The spirit of the mariner must be incarnated and reincarnated. And this brings us to the ultimate orgasm:

*Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony
Which forced me to begin my tale
And then it left me free ...*

Once the tale is told, and the truths conveyed, the onus is on the receiver:

*I walk like might from land to land
I have strange power of speech
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me
To him my tale I teach.*

The poet is a universal presence, recognizing neither barriers nor boundaries. He is a man possessed, awaiting a kind of divine exorcism. The moment some kindred spirit alights, a chord is struck and the secret revealed. And so the master finds his disciple, the host his guest. The marriage feast is waiting to welcome the new initiate. He is sadder and wiser, for he has had a call into a vision that includes "all things both great and small." Here we have the forging of a poetic sensibility. The conception has occurred, birth will follow in the next poem *Kubla Khan*.

It may be recalled that the cast in *The Ancient Mariner* is almost entirely male, the only female impression being indicated in the reference to 'Death' and 'Life in Death' as "she". By contrast, the scenario of *Kubla Khan*, is almost entirely female, with the male presence suggested in the name that gives the title to the poem. Even the persona of the poet/architect is hermaphroditic -"the floating hair"

(female feature) recalling the “Maenads” as they danced round Bacchus while the “flashing eye” (the male feature) is inherited from the ancient mariner, and more specifically from Coleridge himself. Dorothy Wordsworth, recalling her first impression of Coleridge wrote: “His eye is large and full and not very dark, but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind. It has more of the poet’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling, than I have ever witnessed.” For the rest, the poem offers a female macrocosm – birth being a female exercise and the male only a bystander. While the journey of the mariner was transverse, here it is vertical, starting from the bowels of the earth, upwards to the Sun.

The scene presented at the outset is an enclosed one.

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree
Where Alph the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a Sunless sea
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree
And here were forests ancient as the hills
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.*

The above lines provide a description of the site where the pleasure-dome is going to be built. It is awesome and venerable, ancient and incalculable. It has a subterranean life and a surface one. Alph, the river of time, has been flowing down the ages, carrying and depositing its cargo of generations, into the “sunless sea.” In so doing, it is building up a tradition, enriched by individual talent. As it is eternal so it is primal. By contrast, the scene on ground is cultivated but secured. The timeless river, branching into “sinuous rills”, has ensured the fertility of the man-made garden, while the proximity of ancient forests provides a historical view. True art is always true.

At the very outset we are in the womb of mother earth. “The caverns measureless to man”, are teeming with pre-natal life, and the “sunless sea” providing the amniotic fluid, which sustains the foetus during the gestation period. Here all is dark and unconscious. Oxygen enters through the umbilical cord (“The chasm which started down the green hill athwart

a cedarn cover"). The "green hill" is the cultivated garden, the conscious life, and "down" is the "sunless sea" – the womb from which life emerges and the tomb to which it returns. Here our heredity is determined and our personality forged, consciousness or environment being only a modifier. The first manifestation of the unknowable before creation itself, was the egg or womb of the universe; and was afterwards symbolized in India by a female form, Kali, as the mother of all the gods. It is nobody's contention that Coleridge was influenced by Hindu mythology, but stressing as he does, the age and agelessness of the scene, the critic could be provoked into drawing an analogy from a culture that is synonymous with antiquity. "Samkhya" philosophy has assigned three parts to the mother archetype, which are usually translated into goodness, passion and darkness (Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas). These are, as stated by Jung in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, the three aspects of the mother: "her cherishing and nourishing goodness, her orgiastic emotionality and her Stygian depths. Being a source of recurring life, like Alph the sacred river, the mother's sustaining power is unambiguously proclaimed. Her emotionality (Rajas) is manifested in the smouldering lava of geology that intermittently erupts (observe the huge fragments that vaulted like "rebounding hail", the "dancing rocks" and the forced "fountain".) Clearly the earth is a simmering cauldron as is the mind before it achieves resolution. The ecstasy of birth is preceded by the agony of labour. Observe the birth pangs:

*And from the chasm with ceaseless turmoil seething
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced...*

Coleridge the midwife has delivered the child.

Chaos precedes clarification and History is not unkind to apocalypses (Did not the Flood cause Noah to mobilize his ark?). But in the context of the present the anarchy is baffling. The place is savage and haunted, the couple torn asunder, as "woman wails for her demon lover". Under the circumstances a monster should be born. Instead we have a miracle of rare device, a "Sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice" prohibiting us to isolate experience. Coleridge encourages the historical perspective by reminding us that the river had run through "wood and dale" past

immeasurable caverns before terminating in the ocean. The span in terms of chronological time is immense. "And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far/Ancestral voices prophesying war".

If you accept that tumult is precursory (like birth-pangs before birth), then wars are a part of the body politic, which come and will be overcome. Kubla is undisturbed and proceeds with his peace time preoccupation - the building of his pleasure dome.

*The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves
Where was heard the mingled measure
Of the fountain and the caves*

The 'cave' is primordial darkness and unconsciousness. The fountain is light and consciousness. The pleasure dome, reflecting both, asserts the allegiance of creation to memory. So Coleridge anticipates Jung by over a hundred years! By the synthesizing power of imagination, all disparities are dissolved and resolved. The sunny dome and caves of ice are ultimately one. "The woman wailing for her demon lover" (his desertion made him a demon) is now transposed into the "Abyssinian maid". The unrequited love of the former transfigured into the all-sustaining love of the "mother"—the Muse, the mother of Art. The presence of the "dulcimer" suggests an aural appeal. The Abyssinian maid being a kind of St. Cecilia, who was invoked by Dryden, to celebrate music's triumphant power. All arts are interchangeable. With music "loud and long", a dome is built in air, defying gravity, defying mortality. And the poet, fed on honey-dew takes his place among the immortals. The child is father of the man. Having inherited the "floating hair" of his mother, and the "fleshing eye" of his father, he is both bearer and donor of the great tradition.

The *Ode to Dejection* is a straightforward statement. Untouched by allegory, it does not allow an exhaustive exploration. I have included it in this trilogy only to reach a conclusion.

The poem begins with an uneasy prognosis. The old moon, reminder of ancient grudges, is threatening a storm. The "new moon", only a phantom, is too frail to offer assurance, while the self suspended in between, is overcome with

desolation and consequent dejection. The springs of imagination have dried up, leaving the poet barren and inert. Perhaps an external impact might revive the flagging spirit. He welcomes the storm as a kind of stimulant. Only stimulants are at best distracting, at worst hallucinating. The more one tries to flee one's ghosts, the more threatening they become. The "Furies" unable to evolve into the "Eumenides", cause their victim to embrace mirages. The poet is seen fluctuating between torture and inertia. The "Aeolian lute", whose variant, the "dulcimer" (*Kubla Khan*) inspired and identified the highest poetry, is a prey to "dull sobbing drafts". Reality's dark dream will not admit a vision. Consequently the macrocosm is split, and images of mutilation proliferate. The wind "raves" like a lunatic, the tree is "blasted", the house inhabited by witches. The month of showers - presumably April, has retracted into a weary winter, where hope of Christmas is lost in a season of Saturnalia. ("Mad lutanist...makes devil's yule"). The "Shaping spirit" that is imagination is broken, and its product a chimera. The haunted man will see the world not in God's image, but in his own. And so we are given a cataclysm:

*What tellst thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout
With groans of trampled men with smarting wounds
At once they groan with pain and shudder with the
cold.*

When the violence subsides from exhaustion, we are given another picture, less diabolic but equally pathetic.

*Of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild
Not far from home but she lath lost her way.*

To lose one's way in the proximity of one's home is an intimation of a total alienation from the source. The *Ode to Dejection*, is Coleridge's personal elegy. He can only lament the loss of what he earlier had. From past knowledge, he is able to view the order, to examine its working and endorse its imperatives:

*Joy, lady? Is the spirit and the power
which wedding nature to us give in dower
and thence flows all that chorus or ear or sight
All melodies the echoes of that voice*

All colours a suffusion from that light.

Joy clearly, is the result of a union between man and nature, the individual soul and the world soul, achieved by an act of imagination. Divorce brings about the emotional death. Ours is her wedding garment, so is ours her shroud. When we consider the "lady" to whom Coleridge addresses his ode, we are struck by a radical demotion. The mariner, thanks to extraordinary experiences, had become a kind of mythic figure. So was the Abyssinian maid metamorphosed into the Muse. Here the throne is empty. The lady does not represent divinity. She is only a kindly companion to whom Coleridge relates his tale of woe with lessons learnt. Since personal recovery is not possible he can only hope that this "Lady, Friend devoutest of my choice", may reap the blessings that passed him by. The lady is probably Sarah Hutchison (Wordsworth's sister-in-law), with whom he was said to be in love. The emotion prohibited by convention is idealised in art - the term "lady" indicating distance and worship. And the Ode ends on a note of great generosity as the poet pledges:

*To her may all things live from Pole to Pole
Their life the eddying of her living soul.*

The union of microcosm and macrocosm, the source of all art, is being visualized...somehow, somewhere ...to be achieved by someone.



PERRY MILLER AND PURITAN ORIGINS OF AMERICA : A CRITICAL STUDY

A. Karunaker

Without some understanding of Puritanism...there is no understanding of America- Perry Miller (The American Puritans :Their Prose and Poetry p.ix).

The study of Puritanism in America is perhaps the only part of American historiography that has attained a sophistication unmatched by any other area of American studies. Puritan scholarship in America gained popularity and critical significance from the increasing belief that the religious origins of New England had, if not in its entirety, some influence in the shaping of the American national character. It became apparent that "Puritanism was firmly rooted in the American experience and in the emerging American mind of the eighteenth century and from New England as its center it has radiated its influence in American Civilization, for good or ill, from that day to this and the end is not yet."¹

The earliest attempts to trace Puritan elements in American culture, and the form and consequence of its persistence began at the turn of the twentieth century when writers like Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt, Stuart Sherman, William Carlos Williams, H.L. Mencken and others were drawn into a caustic disputation; each upholding or deploring the good or evil effects of Puritanism on American life. Eventually, anti-Puritan intellectuals, most notably H.L. Mencken, triumphed in attributing the enormity of contemporary American society to seventeenth century New England Puritanism. The following years witnessed a spate of intense hatred and censure of everything that was considered Puritan in its origins. However, it was not until the 1920s that the simplistic, superficial and biased scholarship of the early antifiliopietists was not only neutralized but also superceded by a serious incisive and highly intellectual study of American Puritanism.

The tradition of re-examining and evaluating American society through an analysis of the seventeenth century New England mind was initiated and established by a group of historians at Harvard. Kenneth B. Murdock's *Increase Mather* (1925) and Samuel E. Morison's *Builders of the Barg Colony* (1930) were forerunners in the impartial study of New England Puritanism and offered fresh insights and unlimited opportunity to prospective scholars in the area. Significantly, Perry Miller, a Chicagoan atheist who never shared the alleged filio piety or provincial pride of the Harvard School, emerged as the most powerful exponent of American Puritanism at a time when "the word 'Puritan' served as a comprehensive sneer against every tendency in American civilization which we held reprehensible - sexual diffidence, censorship, prohibition, theological fundamentalism, political hypocrisy and all the social antics which Sinclair Lewis, among others, was stridently ridiculing."²

Miller's analysis of Puritan writings led him to define Puritanism as a Monolithic entity and projected New England Puritans as a thinking community; this work not only silenced Puritanism's detractors by clearing gross misconceptions but also elevated New England Puritans to the venerable status of the founding fathers of America. Working from the premise that intellect directed history and rhetoric reflected ideas, Miller devoted himself to "defining and classifying the principal concepts of the Puritan mind in New England; of accounting for the origins, inter-relations and significance of ideas."³

In *The New England Mind* (1939), Miller not only analyzed theological conceptions, ecclesiastical doctrines and tribal exceptionalism of the Puritans but also related these ideas to provincial history of New England, thus opening an entirely new and unexplored chapter in the study of New England Puritanism. It is now an established fact that the entire corpus of his writings has become a feeding ground to many a famished scholar intent on unraveling the elusive, mysterious origins of American identity and national character.

Miller's uniqueness lies in his assertion that the Puritanism that was brought to the New World was not the rigid Calvinism of the continent but a more moderate version of it. He opined that this transformation had already begun on the

cue of the Great Migration of 1630, and took a new shape in seventeenth century New England. The need to relate to an inscrutable God and commit their transatlantic venture to Him led them to domesticate God by developing a unique form of Puritanism called 'covenant' or 'Federal' theology, which became the cornerstone of seventeenth century New England.

Miller asserted with finality that the sole purpose of the founding of Massachusetts Bay Colony was for the establishment of an evangelical community, a biblical commonwealth, which would serve as a model worthy of emulation by England and the rest of the World. The Puritan errand into the American Wilderness was "not a mere scouting expedition but an essential maneuver in the drama of Christendom"⁴ aimed at completing the Reformation which remained unaccomplished in the Old World. However, as Miller pointed out, the Puritan system of thought could not stand in the face of the stark realities of colonial life in New England and the errand in its true sense came to a tragic end within the first few decades of settlement. He argued that the strain of adapting themselves to the New World environment, to the tune of an expanding frontier and the immense opportunities for commercial exploitation took its toll on the New England theocracy. The rise of apostasy and the declension of the biblical Commonwealth led to desperate attempts to salvage covenant philosophy. The stream of public exhortations and Jeremiads that followed launched the disintegrating New England theocracy on the process of Americanization.

Miller's insightful analysis of key concepts like errand, covenant, Jeremiad, Typology and so on, which formed the core of seventeenth century New England imagination, has provided immense opportunity and renewed vigour for extensive research in the understanding of the American mind. Although subsequent scholarship in Puritan studies has shown that Miller's work is highly intellectualized and that it does not adequately relate Puritan ideas to contemporary New England society, it has nevertheless helped to prove that Puritanism was central to early American life and to the transition of the colony to World Power. It must be noted that even after half a century of Miller's first exposition, his work continues to be the primary

source for understanding American Puritanism and all subsequent research in the area has been but an extension of his theses. The continued interest in the Puritan Origins of America and the ever increasing corpus of research in the area stand as a testament and tribute to the colossal work of Perry Miller who deserves to be called the father of Puritan Studies in America.

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**FICTIONALISING HISTORY: BHARATI
MUKHERJEE'S *THE HOLDER OF THE WORLD***

Nagendra Kumar

“Even more than other writers, I must learn to astonish, to shock” proclaims Bharati Mukherjee in *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977:299) with a spirit that motivates her writing. The universally acclaimed ‘immigrant voice’, Bharati Mukherjee has produced a body of work that both sustains wonder and evokes surprise. In her six novels and two short story collections she has deliberately, and sometimes flamboyantly, fused many impulses, backgrounds and selves to create a “new immigrant” literature. Hers is a ‘voice’ distinctly heard in today’s diasporic circle.

Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Holder of the World* (1993) is a unique fusion of fiction and history. Here the author uses the technique of ‘virtual reality’ as a trope for dislocating and transforming literary, cultural, and historical topographies of Mughal India and colonial 17th and 18th century United States. Like Walter Scott, she enlivens her pages with a truthful evocation of the era under discussion. Through the fictional story of an extraordinary American woman Hannah Easton, Mukherjee exposes the snobbery, hypocrisy and corrupt world of East India Company’s rule in India. Hannah, a puritan American woman, visits India along with her husband and discovers true happiness in the company of a Hindu Raja--Jadav Singh and returns home a changed and transformed human being. Thus in the present novel also Mukherjee’s focus continues to be on immigrant women and their freedom from relationships to become individuals. However, it differs from Mukherjee’s other works as it has “a wide canvas that sweeps across continents and centuries, cultures and religions. Immigration, exile, alienation and foreign lands have always been the colour of Mukherjee’s plate and with *The Holder of the World*, she uses the familiar tones and shades to create a universe of infinite possibility and eternal time” (Sattar 6). In a startling commingling of history and imagination, Mukherjee lights up the making and

very nature of the American consciousness in this novel. Mukherjee's inspiration to write *The Holder of the World* springs from her love for Indian miniature painting. A miniature titled "A European Woman in Aurangzeb's Court" wherein a Caucasian woman stands resplendent in full Mughal dress makes Mukherjee suddenly realize "I was looking at a woman who three hundred years back had taken a lot of risks, had transformed herself".

The novel opens with a 20th century asset hunter and researcher Beigh Masters busy reading *Auctions and Acquisitions*, one of the trade magazines in her field and her lover, Venn, an Indian computer scientist busy "re-creating the universe, one nano second, one minute at a time" (*The Holder* 5). They are the dealers in the things of the past and their job is "uniting people and possessions" (5). Presently Beigh Masters is trying to locate what her client calls the most perfect diamond in the world, "The Emperor's Tear". It belonged to the last recognized Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, and was stolen from him during a battle against Raja Jadav Singh, a Hindu lover of 17th century puritan woman Hannah Easton. As Beigh tries to trace the diamond she gets obsessed with Hannah's extraordinary life: "It isn't the gem that interests me. It's the inscription and the provenance. Anything having to do with Mughal India gets my attention. Anything about the Salem Bibi, precious-as-Pearl, feeds me"(5).

Bharati Mukherjee uses the technique of time travel quite cleverly to unravel the mystery of 'The Emperor's tear'. Beigh's searches in museums for East India Company documents and colonial literature, her travels to India and auctions all over the world, are commendable efforts to reconstruct a daring woman's odyssey. As she fumbles for more details about Hannah Easton, she discovers in her a remote relative of hers. As she proudly claims: "I'm part of this story, the Salem Bibi is part of the tissue of my life" (21).

Hannah Easton is the only surviving child of Edward and Rebecca Easton in the Massachusetts colony. Her father dies of a bee-sting when she is just one and her mother leaves her to run away with her lover to quench her physical hunger. Adopted by the Fitchs-Robert and Susannah-Hannah 'the somber orphan' (39) is brought to Salem. Quite early in her life she shows an extraordinary skill for needle

work and earns a lot of kudos. When the time comes she marries a man with an eye-patch--Gabriel Legge. Gabriel has a dubious character and all his tall promises prove to be mere phantoms after marriage. Hannah finds to her dismay that Gabriel's father, far from being a ship owner, is an indebted drunkard from Morpeth. Gabriel's life too is a mystery : "He could describe the interior of a Mongol tent, the smell of camels, the pink flesh inside the trunk of a Raja's elephant, but he could not, or would not, answer the simplest questions about the ships he sailed or captains he served" (71).

Hannah accompanies her husband to India in 1695 where he works as a junior factor in East India Company. Inquisitive, vital, awake to her own sense of self and purpose, she is a person undreamed of in puritan society. She is a spiritual aristocrat in an age of common believers. Her perceptive eyes observe the surly realities of the British trading company in an instant: "They had not come to India in order to breed and colonize, or even to convert. They were here to plunder, to enrich themselves"(99). But Hannah's concern in this new world is "to peel the superficiality and social grace and dwell beneath it in a quest for a meaningful life". In fact as soon as she plants her feet on the Coromandel Coast, she feels an instinctive urge for belonging and mutters that she does not "aspire to return to England upon the completion of Gabriel's tour" (104). She knows that she has been transported to the other side of the world and this is more than mere 'conveyancing' for her unlike others. Many years later she calls this trip and her stay in India, her "translation" (104).

The life around her thrills her and she enjoys every bit of her stay in India. She establishes a kind of 'unspoken' bond with exotica--India. It is this love of life which makes her almost a contemporary of the narrator, Beigh Masters, a 20th century American woman who blurts out : "Of all the qualities I admire in Hannah Easton that makes her entirely our contemporary in mood and sensibility, none is more touching to me than the sheer pleasure she took in the world's variety" (104).

During their voyage her husband talked endlessly about life and society in India. He had explained to her that every one on Coromandel belonged to a caste, if he was a Hindu, a

right-hand or left-hand caste, and every one was either shia or sunni if he was a Muslim. They all spoke different languages, they owed fidelity to different masters, they worshipped different gods, and their ancestors had come from different countries. It was all nightmarish for her. The immense variety was thrilling and exciting but it had been inconceivable to a puritan soul like Hannah. Her world was not so varied, not so diverse.

Right from the moment of her arrival in India, Hannah is aware that she belongs to the land and people of this country. She knows that she has nothing to do with the snobbery, hypocrisy and malice of those Britishers who have come here to plunder, to lead a life of comfort, lechery and convenience. Her encounter with English women, the wives of other Company officials, further intensifies her disgust with their pretensions to nobility and self-conscious superiority among the local community. These were the women who led ordinary lives in England, but claimed command and respect here, always eager to display it in all its vulgarity. Women like Martha Ruxton and Sarah Higginbotham are examples of English snobbery and disdain characteristic of the women in the colonies. Their life of reason and etiquette is sharply contrasted with the dubious adventurous and morally ambivalent lives of their husbands whose 'bibis' become the primary subject of conversation among these women: "Any servant with a new sari, any cheekiness detected, any thing missing, meant a good serving girl had passed over to bibihood. Bibis were simultaneously beneath notice, no more than cute little pets like monkeys or birds, and devious temptresses, priestesses of some ancient, irresistible and overpowering sensuality" (131). The bibi, Hannah is told, has to be admitted as a natural consequence of married life for "accommodation was synonymous with expatriate femininity" (134).

Hannah's bemused reception of this ordained truth testifies to her open-mindedness and her capacity to view a situation from a perspective other than that of a conventional society. She feels herself exempt from the bibi jealousies of other English women. Her freedom-loving spirit finds India amicably suited to her aspirations. The contrast of her present residence with the former ones by the narrator gives us a clue, at once, to the life of luxury and comfort led by the

company men in India and Hannah's freedom from the physical and mental oppression in her own world:

In Brookfield, in Stepney and Salem, a house was a barricade to stop encroachment. Outdoors was a prowling ground for Satan and his companions; indoors was furnished, tamed and therefore safe. But the house that she was to live in....was built to entice crystal-bright tropical starlight, spume-slanted breeze, bugs, birds and butterflies through its huge barred windows (118-19).

While fusing history with fiction, Mukherjee never shirks from reflecting Post-Colonial anxiety. The pompous life style, cruelty, lechery, and the Britishers' feeling of disdain towards the natives are contradicted with the deplorable plight of the Indian mass. The fort in which the Britishers lived was Little England : "The Fort St. George Council's penal code encouraged straight and narrow living. Uncleanliness, lying, cheating, drunkenness, swearing, missing morning or evening prayers, using seditious words, mutinying, dueling, all were punishable with whippings, mounting of the 'wooden horse', confinement and fines. When caught. When admitted" (127-28). Thus Bharati Mukherjee presents a true picture of the colonial rule in India in these pages.

Hannah has an altogether different experience with the first manifestation of a *bibi*--Bhagmati--pulling herself down from the terrace of her house; dressed in sheer muslin. She at once mesmerizes Hannah and later turns to be her confidante too. This image of Bhagmati persists in Hannah's mind as suggestive of sensuality, magical attraction and passionate representation of this land: Now "Hannah felt herself no more at home in England than she did in Coromandel" (164).

With Gabriel Legge turning to pirateship and becoming "the Robinhood of the Coromandel Coast"(167), her life starts changing at a brisk pace around the year 1700. She leaves Gabriel on grounds of faithlessness and then receives the news of the wreckage of his ship. She herself survives a bridge collapse as a Hindu Raja--Jadav Singh of Devgad, saves her. She turns a mistress (*bibi*) of the Raja. Here the irony of her situation is too explicit to be ignored. One who leaves her husband for keeping a *bibi* now willingly becomes

a bibi herself and exults in this new found status. But this is really imperative for the total transformation of her personality, because her yearning for a kind of passionate salvation as a way of recreating her mother's choice is largely fulfilled in her encounter with Jadav Singh. He offers her a life of limitless possibilities and sensuous pleasures undreamed of in the English world. It is this experience of being overwhelmed by love, of being possessed to the point of distraction that Hannah embraces with the totality of her being and little moral speculation. "In Massachusetts Bay, life had been so hard, the summer so short, that the freaks of nature were given less opportunity to emerge and no comfort to thrive" (173). But India opens new avenues and she is ready to embrace her alien lover. The emotional love of the East has driven her to frenzy:

She wanted the Raja and nothing else, she would sacrifice any thing for his touch and the love they made. What she felt for the Raja was of a different order from what she had felt for Gabriel, or not dared to feel for Hubert. Gabriel and Hubert, for all their distinctive eccentricities, were men cast in one familiar mold, men who thrilled and disappointed within a predictable range. The Raja was an agent of Providence. He had saved her life, then saved her from the chilly, unfulfilled life of a governess(229-30).

Jadav Singh continues to court her one quarter of each night. This alters the sensibility of Hannah. The love of the East makes her more emotional, more passionate and more raw. She welcomes this change: "With Gabriel she had clung to Salem's dos and don'ts. She had pulled and pummeled the familiar rules, hoping they'd help to make sense of her own evolution. With Jadav Singh, she'd finally accepted how inappropriate it was in India—how fatal—to cling, as white towns tenaciously did, to Europe's rules. She was no longer the woman she'd been in Salem or London" (234). Ultimately Hannah discovers that "the survivor is one who improvises, not follows, the rules" (234). This realization of Hannah is a message of the author herself who invariably emphasizes, in almost all her fictional works, that only those people can survive in a new, alien world who are elastic, who can shape themselves according to the availability of space by improvising upon their native rules.

Jadav Singh's death in a bloody battle with the mighty Mughals and Hannah's encounter with Emperor Aurangzeb, the holder of the world (literal translation of 'Alamgir') mature her experiences of her journey to the mysterious East. The suspension of morality and the openness to new experiences make her confront Aurangzeb and even bow to his gifts of pearls as a symbol of his superiority and power. Her duties finally accomplished, she returns to Salem not as a reformed American but a rebel living on the fringes of society.

The novel ends with Hannah's return journey to Salem where she locates her mother from a mental asylum and brings up her "black" daughter Pearl Singh, a symbol of her Indian love, and fearlessly stays in Salem all her life. Hema Nair is all praise for this remarkable woman: "Hannah is a stunning creation, a bold mind striving for identity in strange surroundings, a timeless creature trying to survive in a rigid, inexorably defined society" (106).

Bharati Mukherjee tries to create the national history of America through the character of Hannah. She is a colonized puritan who feels suffocated in the orthodox, oppressive society of American colony. She wants to free her self to realize her dreams and whims fully, 'without a sharp North or a declining West'. She is, in a way, the true representative of the American consciousness in the making, with its spirit of adventure, its openness to new experiences and its transformation. The writer herself endorses this fact when she says in one of her interviews: "Hannah in *The Holder*, is an embodiment of the guts, imagination and assertiveness of that American spirit, and its underside—the will to imperialize" (Chen and Goudie).

It has been a painstaking endeavour of Bharati Mukherjee to find a happy solution to the conflict of the cultures of the East and the West. The present novel, more than any other work of Mukherjee, comes close to success in bridging the gap between the two cultures. It "envisages and engages 'history' as a complex space across which lives are not merely connected, but intricately intertwined and intensely lived intertemporally—a space against which the superficial divides that separate us can be perpetually questioned and dismantled" (Alam 124). Thus the novel exhibits a hunger for

connectedness that brings fiction in close proximity to history.

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RACIST AND COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS : READING JUDITH WRIGHT AND SALLY MORGAN

Harpreet Pruthi

Women writers of Australia have established a distinctive literary tradition by writing about aspects and issues in divergence from men. Their perception of the Australian continent and its inhabitants marks a decidedly distinct body of literature unfolding an alternative view of the country, its customs and culture. The literary traditions of White women in Australia evolved from an identifiable source – letter writing was the formative activity. Apart from the fact that it was a form of writing encouraged among women, letter writing was in keeping with women's responsibility of maintaining family ties. This need to write was prompted by the desire to be abreast of developments in England and also to narrate what was happening in the new world. The letters described and defined the new found identities of these female writers and helped them to give a new meaning to their existence through this medium of correspondence. This is why introspection and self-development feature prominently in the literary traditions of Australian women. Another aspect of the Australian women's writing is the voice of 'exile', resonating from this diasporic literature. Some of the prominent letter writers of that era were Rachel Henning and Fanny Burney. Like the letter, memoirs and annals are also an important part of the traditional literature of women answering their need for catharsis. In recent times there has been a proliferation in women's writing reflecting the attempt to redefine not only their identity but also the entire gamut of received knowledge, value-systems and power nexus in the light of the feminist ideology read in the post-colonial context.

Judith Wright was born at Armidale, New South Wales in a clergy family and grew up on the ancestral property in the heart of New England tablelands. Her love for the countryside, her 'blood's country' runs through much of her

poetry. Her first volume *The Moving Image* appeared in 1946 exhibiting all the passionate intensity of the war time years which it was a result of. The appearance of *Woman to Man* in 1949 confirmed the poetic genius of a writer of unique personal power. Through her works Judith Wright, in a narrow sense, could be counted as an anti-intellectual since much of what she has to say aligns her with those who oppose the excessive reliance on rationality and objectivity espoused as intellectual values in the name of Enlightenment. Judith Wright's characteristic feature of writing poetry was that the emotions preceded the thought though it was vice versa for others. Wright wrote perceptively and benevolently of themes and characters from Australia's past. *Woman to Man* explores the veiled immensity of the life sources of sexual and maternal love explored in archetypal fashion. She expresses post-colonial consciousness in terms of alienation, death of the indigenous culture and the role of language in shaping of a new culture. Wright believed that poetry had a social mission, that whatever else it might have been, poetry was always for her a linguistic act designed to make an impact on the world.

The metaphysical contrivance in Judith Wright's poetry refers to the spiritual mystery of human life and relationships. In her work there is a spirit of the re-creation of the Australian landscape - it's people, it's history and the way one influences the other evoking an intense essence of the domain. She is intrigued by the dichotomy prevalent in Australia's literary history : in particular the contrast between the feeling of exile in some Australian poets – manifested as a conservative impulse towards European tradition and ideas – and the feeling of release and opportunity in a new society underlying the more radical Australian poets. Both reactions are seen as an expression of the split consciousness, an aspect of attention within a marginal culture which is on the edge of the larger European tradition but not an integral part of it. Her attitude was commiserative and she was a highly vociferous advocate of the Aborigines. She admitted that the Whites have usurped the land of the Aborigines who were the true owners of the land while the Whites were an engrafted growth in Australia. Another tenet of her poetry has been the continuity of experience through time. Human experience in Judith Wright's poetry is painfully torn by contrariety and collision; an unceasing obsession

with time and the possibility of an inherent violence in man's nature seem increasingly to deprive life of perpetuity and essence. There is also a celebration of human and natural energies existing side by side with an impulse towards self-conscious intellectual probing of her experience and exploration of ideas.

Her love poems are not mere expressions of passionate sensuality; for her the world of love is full of pain, parting and loss, which by crystallization of her poetry she transforms into exhilaration. She is not concerned with the romance of love or even with man as a prime object of passion : with her he is the main instrument, the collaborator in the creation of the child. Not that he is to her by any means an abstract or an unregarded instrument : he is a beloved and she laments his loss for he is a refuge from loneliness, but it is the child or the child to be which evokes the intensity of her passion. The high value she places on maternity defines the universal principles of the feminine rather than the historical position of an individual woman. Judith Wright in her love poetry expresses the female effervescence of sexuality and motherhood. She expresses her 'woman-ness' in her perception, conception and contrivance. She displays the power of entering into the objects of experience, of becoming part of them and making them part of herself; moreover she perceives each object with an imaginative vision that relates it to other objects so that it becomes part of a unified experience, a world – her world; beyond that she conjures up each object's past and sometimes also its future and since her own past remains to her almost as real as her present though not as interesting as her future, her vision appears emancipated from the chains of time and space.

Wright was profoundly concerned with language and its ability to construct worlds. The Imperialists construct a world that does not reflect authentically the Australian scenario. The constructed world of language is synthetic and her world view has merged itself into and become internalized in the Australian Psyche. She at first seems to embrace a linguistic irresolution but it turns out to be based on a romantic faith in the rejuvenating potential of poetry. In Wright's analysis the available language is inadequate to deal with the new circumstances which have arisen in contemporary life. Words are now dissociated from reality, there is a dichotomy

between the event as it happens to the individual, his immediate experience and the words in which he must express this experience.

The post-coloniality of Judith Wright's symbolism surfaces while decoding the poetic metaphors of her exceptionally lyrical works and a whole range of profound, depth haunting aspects come to the fore impinging upon her poetic sensibility. A. D. Hope is perceptive in his judgement that Wright's "First task as a poet was to create the heartland from which her poetry could speak, speak with its unequivocal voice.... Australia for Judith Wright is not a world that she aims at : it is something she aims from."¹ Broadly the dynamics of her poetry can be explained in terms of her position as a White post-colonial poet cautiously distancing herself from her British ancestry by way of disapproving in general the imperialistic politics of appropriation and subjugation in any form. To quote Wright "The settlements of White Australia are to be scathingly defined as wholly unnatural growths, exported cancers, exaggerations of the worst features of a western civilization which is itself incomprehensible [to the Aborigines]."² The eco-feminist axis of her poetry takes her work ahead of any of the traditional post-colonial frames of the West versus the East, the Orient versus the Occident, the First World versus the Third World as there are facets of her poetry which speak of the intertextual underpinnings of her post-coloniality. Woman is projected as an archetype of the female principle – life-bearer and life-preserver in Wright's poetry. The primogenous instinct for survival and regeneration makes her variously assume the roles of lover, procreator or mother as is evident from her poems "Woman to Child" and "Woman to Man":

*the eyeless labourer in the night,
the selfless, shapeless seed I hold,
builds for its resurrection day.*³

It is not surprising then that the most persistent analogic marriages that Wright solemnises are those between the creative powers of nature, human sexuality and poetry. As observed by A. D. Hope that "Not only the act of passion but the outcome, the conception, the gestation, the birth and nurture of the child are the subject of the poet's meditation

and the aspect of the world to which she gives an articulate voice".⁴

Superficially read, Wright's poems show love in its most primitive form: sex, "the blind head butting at the dark"⁵, but at the metaphorical manifestations these very shades of emotions acquire a profundity where love becomes a true allegory for feminine interaction with the Divine :

*This is the maker and the made;
this is the question and the reply
The blaze of light along the blade.
Oh hold me, for I am afraid.*⁶

Thus it would not be wrong to say that love finds a religious mysticism in Wright's poetry where it is seen not merely as a physical compulsion behind creation or rejuvenation but also as a spiritual force which cements relationships where Father, Mother and Child together constitute the trinity of love. The lunar imagery recurring in Wright's poetry sees woman as fertile, waving and waning through her menstruation as part of the procreative process. It is here that every synecdoche of her poetry articulates the female experience, grounded as it is in patriarchal indoctrination - echoing the western feminist models – a mere caricature of woman as the procreator. As pointed out by Ruby Rich:

*Female biology has far more radical implications than we have yet come to appreciate. Patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its own narrow specification. Indeed a theory of culture incorporates ideas about women's body, language and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur. The ways in which women conceptualise their bodies and their reproductive functions are intricately linked to their cultural environments.*⁷

Judith Wright can then be accused of being a post-colonial poet, without the traditional native radicalism, a humanist without the civilizing zeal of the modernist, a feminist without vengeance who instinctively and spontaneously merges the patriarchal notions of femininity by theorizing female specificity in terms of female sexuality.

'Black Feminism' distinguishes itself from the 'White' or the 'First World' Feminisms and can be said to be a relative

political position, a locus of antagonisms and conflicts at once involved in cultural and national ideologies. In order to locate and identify phenomena such as Black Feminism the relevance of academic conformation, cultural domination and assimilation become determinate factors. The shifting influences of racial, cultural, national or political agencies have implications for the evolution of 'Black Feminism.' Australian Black women writers' disputing the tendency to homogenize 'Black' womanhood to specific cultural experience further led to their attempt to assert identities and universalise it. They primarily explore the universal issues and themes of motherhood, indigenous language, and the assertion of women writing within the group as well as on the international level. The role of colonial institutions with their impositions of national and racial identities places the criticism of these texts within a wider problematic of First World/Third World politics and power. The question of authenticity of origins, of cultural identity, of race prevails as issues within the politics of 'Australian Black Feminism.' Identity politics and dialectics of miscegenation, racism and class, controversies about the 'stolen generation' complicate the broad terrain of racial difference on which 'Blackness' is identified. On the whole it can be said that Australian Black women's writing challenges colonial, imperialist paradigms of black identity and yet represent blackness in ways that reinforce and sustain White supremacy.

Sally Morgan's *My Place* adds yet another dimension to the Australian women's writing, by being the first Aboriginal narrative of expose. A poignantly moving saga of marginalisation, alienation and diaspora, *My Place* comes forth as a post-colonial autobiography foregrounded with racial, Aboriginal, feminist, class and gender concerns, carefully exploring the historical context and the nexus between Aboriginal agency and resistance, and the White institutions of subjugation. Victoria Laurie goes on to express that: "Morgan's *My Place* is the picture of generational dispossession and denial – of land, of kinship, of successive children stolen away, of wealthy white men who disowned them...an account of how she cajoled and gently bullied her family towards the truth about their collective Aboriginal identity and traced their life stories of her mother and grandmother, Daisy, back along a road that lead directly to

the gate of a white Pastoralist pioneer, Alfred Howden Drake Brockman."⁸

A metonym for assimilation by absorption, *My Place* delineates Sally Morgan's reminiscences and historiographical records of her kinsmen. Through the memories and images of her childhood and adolescence, vague hints and echoes begin to emerge, hidden knowledge is uncovered and a fascinating story unfolds a mystery of identity culminating with clues and suggested solutions as the protagonists unravel their experiences. The reader participates as awareness to the atrocities are exposed through the system of racial and patriarchal violence.

Caught in a double bind - patriarchal and colonial - the chief characters of this novel Gladys and Daisy are representative of the stolen generation who construe their lives in terms of the 'I/they' dichotomy where 'they' is the Aboriginal female subsumed within 'I' the superior male colonizer: "I wanted to be White, you see. I'd lie in bed at night and think if God could make me White, It'd be the best thing."⁹ Representative in a sense of every abducted child and every dislocated life, Gladys and Nan narrate the harsh exploitation and repercussion of the oppressor's manifestation of absolute power on the identity of the individual who is hegemonised into becoming a vehicle of colonial ideological indoctrination and cultural subjugation apart from being a matrix for patriarchal acculturation and socialization of females : "Aah, that colour business is a funny thing. Our colour goes away. You mix us with the white man, and pretty soon, you got no black fellas left...All the native women wanted to look like the white women with fancy hairdos and fancy dresses."¹⁰ In this context Simone de Beauvoir delineates:

*Femininity is acultural; one isn't born a woman, one becomes one. Patriarchy wants us to believe that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness, called femininity. A woman who refuses to conform to the patriarchal impositions of certain social standards of femininity, can be labeled both unfeminine and unnatural.*¹¹

The gender bias obvious from this analysis seems to indicate, what Morgan reinforces in her novel, that females

are marked phallicly by their male counterparts. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce which degenerates if one happens to be an Aboriginal. Nan and Gladys both being subject to this degeneration prefer to live life in ignominy ("Can't you just leave the past buried? It wouldn't hurt anyone then") and deny their Aboriginal lineage ("Tell them you are an Indian").

My Place is thus a text that exploits the margins to criticize the centre via a two-pronged strategy - deconstruction of the 'Black Aboriginal woman-ness' and exposition to the superior 'White manliness'. However, the critique turns out more to justify the existence and actions of the mainstream culture by providing an alibi for the perpetuation of an orthodoxy that denies diversity and heterogeneity. The "token figures from the so-called margins"¹², that Sneja Gunew sees as providing alibis for the centre, give the centre permission to promote exclusive histories and deny culpability.

Australian women's writing, thus, in its anxiety to chart out a 'new-woman' - who censures and admonishes, deprecates the reprehensible, reprobate - tends to tread on problematic grounds as it ends up confining itself to the very limits imposed and demarcated by the patriarchal-colonial-monolithic institution - literature as politics and politics as literature. In terms of their autobiographical narratives the position of the Australian Aboriginal is a special one because they are doubly marginalized and expropriated to the psychic and political edge of societies which have themselves experienced the quandary of colonial oppression and antagonism. For this reason they demonstrate a capacity far greater than that of white settler societies to subvert the received assumption about literature. The source of this radical revolution in Australian Aboriginal writers for transformation stems from the narratives bound up with the historiography of each individual.

Aboriginal writing in English, for example the works of Mudrooroo, Archie Weller and prose writers like Sally Morgan, Alice Nannup, Ruby Langford Ginibi, Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Kevin Gilbert seem to establish a dialectics with writing of White Australia as it appropriates the language of the settlers to its own specific political and cultural group of migrants who continue to employ their text from within alternative languages and cultural grouping,

themselves marginalized within the societies which have produced them. Aboriginal women's autobiographies focus as strategies of resistance and strategies of empowerment. This is not to deny that Aboriginal literature is constrained to some measure by White discourse. It is sad, yet true that the Aboriginal people continue to define themselves in terms of 'black/white' opposition. A ritualistic way of thinking leads the Aborigines to represent themselves only in relation to the hegemonic White culture, however, gradually paving the path towards evolving an assertion of their indigenous identity.

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TOWARDS THE TEACHING OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: YOGA-NIDRA AND SUGGESTOPEDIA

Sunita Mishra & C. Muralikrishna

A tired, hungry, exasperated Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*, wrestling all alone with his fish had learnt his most valuable lessons from the sea. He had learnt to communicate with the sea and simultaneously with nature in all its varied forms in and around the sea. Learning the language of life around him had taught him to swim the tide of life and death. Similarly, flying high and lonely but in perfect communion with his being, Jonathan Livingston Seagull had discovered himself as the 'perfect, unlimited gull', capable of flying with his thought. He had discovered the power of love, the joy of being free and also the pleasure of teaching. It is only in teaching, in communicating that he found the final validity of his discovery, his quest for perfection. What is common in both the examples is that communication plays a vital role in discovering both oneself and the world around us. Whatever be the level of the quest, it is incomplete without communication. And whatever be the nature of communication, it is vital for growing, for living itself. Today, with the world increasingly becoming a smaller place to live in, communications have become one of the essential and greatly needed commodities. It is necessary for contact, for interaction and even for simple association with people. And more than all this, it has been found that a person who can communicate well can learn well too. Good communicators learn faster, invariably have better comprehension and sharper cognizance. All this makes it necessary that we include it as one of the essential features in our education system, treat it as one of the desirable skills that has to be carefully built into the learner's personality.

Communication can be described as a process of linking, connecting; a process of reaching out to others and allowing others to reach out to you. It is a process of attempting to

understand. It is primarily an attitude of willingness to give and take; to open up to others and to accept others; to have empathy and the capacity to look at situations from various perspectives. From this point of view, teaching communications is more about building attitudes than developing skills. It is more about developing an attitude to extend beyond oneself, learn from one's surroundings, explore the surroundings as well as one's own self – to hear and recognize the voices around and within oneself. On the whole, developing communication skills is like developing one's positive personality, nurturing attributes that will help one grow, understand, and evolve as part of the life around.

Often communication is seen in very simplistic terms. It is seen as a set of competencies primarily including the spoken and the written mode. Widely it is believed that teaching communications means teaching the art of writing and speaking well. Learners are encouraged to build confidence, practice appropriate speech patterns and taught to use language correctly in different situations. Teaching written communication has included the art of appropriately conveying a certain information, organizing and formatting the writing using appropriate vocabulary and syntax, etc. Sometimes, it is extended to the teaching of assertive communications, negotiation, or the art of influencing people. It is also generally taught as a package involving training in these skills -- an instant package like fast food or coffee.

The factors mentioned above, no doubt, play a very important role in making communication effective. But what seems to be missing out in the whole process is the understanding that real effective communication involves a lot more than just the internalization of these skills. These skills are merely the byproduct of the desire and ability to communicate and not communication themselves. However from the educational point of view, teaching communications can be part of teaching students the art of learning, developing in them the curiosity to probe, analyze and connect to the life around them.

One of the most essential things for effective communication is *empathy*. Empathy is the ability to put oneself in another's position, understand the other's perspective and then proceed to interact or communicate. The assumption here is that one cannot interact effectively unless he/she is capable

of understanding and looking at things from various viewpoints. Here, the capacity to listen plays an extremely important role. The will to communicate is directly dependent on the knowledge that you are being listened to and understood. The feedback from the listener acts as a direct source of encouragement or discouragement for the speaker. Eye contact, facial gestures and even body language are indicators of whether the listener is 'with' the speaker or not.

The second factor that enables effective communication is *confidence*. On many occasions, genuine communication involves exposing one's thoughts, feelings and sentiments and also taking the risk of them being rejected or ignored. Attempting to communicate, thus, involves having confidence in one's own self and also the knowledge that one can withstand rejection. In the presence of such confidence it is primarily the desire to connect and to empathize that takes over and becomes paramount. A strong hold over language does aid communication but eventually we should remember that words or language *per se* account for only 7% of communication. Body language, facial expressions, and tone, pitch and, ofcourse, the context accounts for the major chunk of 93%.

The third factor that becomes a determining factor in communications is *Creativity*. It is important to mention here that creativity does not any longer mean only the capacity to write poetry or paint or do something "extraordinary" and "original". Creativity can be the capacity of solving an interpersonal problem with dexterity or even deciding how to react appropriately to a situation and make it conducive for communication to transpire. Creativity can even mean understanding and empathising with a situation or person or it can mean knowing how and when to react so as to instil confidence in the person we are interacting with. Looked at from this perspective, creativity is also essential for empathy. One has to be able to extend one's cognition beyond the immediate to vary his/her perspective and be empathetic. And this, definitely, is a form of creativity.

All the three factors--confidence, empathy and creativity are faculties that operate in both our conscious and sub-conscious mind. They are faculties that operate from deep inside our consciousness and personality. Hence it is

important that in teaching communications we take the help of techniques that act on the total personality, go into the depths of the learner's consciousness and make the field fertile for learning. Let us look at the following techniques:

YOGA-NIDRA AND SUGGESTOPEDIA:

Yoga-Nidra is a technique of meditation that has been a part of the ancient yogic tradition of India. It is a systematic method for inducing complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation. The term Yoga-Nidra is composed of two Sanskrit words. 'Yoga' meaning union or one-pointedness and 'Nidra', which means sleep, but is more correctly, understood as relaxation. Thus it means relaxation by creating one-pointedness of mind. This state of relaxation is arrived at by turning inwards away from outer experiences. This is achieved by initially rotating one's consciousness/awareness through the various parts of the body which is in a reclining position. This is followed by evoking powerful and positive visual images that enable the mind to entirely withdraw from the immediate surroundings. In this state one switches off so completely that one seems to be asleep. Understandably, it is often referred to as 'psychic sleep', 'sleepless sleep' or 'sleep in a state of inner awareness'. It is a state on the borderline between sleep and wakefulness that allows contact with the subconscious and unconscious. In the deep state of relaxation that results, many kinds of tensions are released and the mind is ready to receive anything new and challenging. In this state, positive suggestions made to oneself have a powerful effect and can bring about a significant change in oneself. This is also a state of heightened receptivity that is very conducive for learning, because material is dropped directly into the unconscious mind without the interference of the conscious mind. This technique offers great potential in the field of training and education, especially in teaching of areas like communication.

Suggestopedia is a similar method of teaching that is beginning to gain currency among the present-day methods of teaching. Experiments in this area have been conducted in Bulgaria by Georgi Lozanov to facilitate language learning. Lozanov considers it as one of the "humanistic approaches" that enables us to learn at an incredibly fast pace. This

approach is again based on the power of suggestion in learning/education. The notion is that positive suggestion makes the learner more receptive and, in turn, stimulates learning. Lozanov believes that a relaxed but focussed state is the optimum state for learning. In order to create this relaxed state in the learner and to promote positive suggestion, suggestopedia makes use of music, a comforting and relaxing environment, and a relationship between the teacher and the student that is similar to the parent-child relationship. Music, in particular, is central to the approach. Unlike other methods and approaches there is no apparent theory of language in suggestopedia and no particular order in which items of language are presented. Learning takes place through activities like 'concert reading' which combines reading with music and eventually makes learning a pleasurable event. During the reading sessions the learners would sit in comfortable seats, armchairs rather than classroom chairs, in a suitably stimulating environment in terms of décor and lighting. After the readings of long dialogues to the accompaniment of music, the teacher would make use of the dialogues for more conventional language work. Large chunks of the dialogues would be internalized by the learners during the readings due both to the relaxed and receptive state of the learners and to the positive suggestion created by the music.

Both the techniques described above stress on the fact that learning is much more than acquiring skills. They believe that learning stems from the deeper mind and hence operates in a state of deep relaxation, which has a direct link with the subconscious mind. Since learning communications, as we have looked at, implies the involvement of the total personality, it can be best learnt only in a state of mind that is open to suggestions and is willing to change. Sometimes it may also involve removing blocks and other constricting factors that operate beneath the conscious, reasoning mind. The teaching of communications, thus, can be effective only if we can build in techniques like Yoga-Nidra and Suggestopedia into the teaching system and make them part of the classroom activity.

Objections to the use of these relaxation techniques in aiding learning may be raised. These objections would be valid given the fact that musical and cultural tastes differ, besides

subjective irritability to texts read out by others and expensiveness of settings. This is not to say, however, that certain elements of the approach cannot be taken and incorporated into the more eclectic approach to language and communication teaching widely in evidence today. The use of music in the background and as an accompaniment to certain activities can be motivating and relaxing. Attention to factors such as décor, lighting and furniture is surely not a bad idea. Dialogues too have their advantages. Perhaps most importantly of all the ideas, creating conditions in which learners are alert and receptive can only have a salutary effect on motivation. Whether these conditions are best created by rotation of awareness, the use of classical music and/or reading dialogues is open to question. However, there is no doubt that the techniques of Yoga-Nidra and/or Suggestopedia offer themselves as interesting tools of exploration for effective learning /training, especially in developing among learners certain vital personality traits like confidence, empathy and creativity that go a long way in enabling them to become better communicators.

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SELF-AGONY AS A MODE OF PROTEST IN JAINENDRA KUMAR'S *TYAGPATRA*

Sunita Rani

In the post-Premchand era in Hindi literature, Jainendra Kumar occupies an undisputed place of prominence. He is probably the first writer of fiction in Hindi who ventured out of the limited circle of idealism and morality to encompass within his expansive vision a sense of reality which can be called down-to-earth. Yet, for Jainendra's characters the battlefield is not the world of action but an inner world of their own self. Characters and not events lend to his fiction both strength and authenticity. Mixing philosophy of life and psychology of perception with his fictional ingredients, Jainendra succeeds in transforming the elemental reality of the human predicament, especially the plight of women, into something decidedly conspicuous.

*Tyagpatra*¹, Jainendra's magnum opus, has been translated into fourteen international languages. This short novel enjoys enormous historical significance in Hindi literature. Exposing the contradiction that exists between human values and the so-called socio-moral beliefs, the novel seeks to reveal the reactionary possibilities of the human mind.

At the centre of the novel is Mrinal. Losing her parents in childhood, Mrinal lives with her brother's family. She develops a sense of closeness with her nephew Pramod who, in turn, is affectionately drawn towards her. In her adolescent stage she feels close intimacy with the brother of her friend Sheela but for certain reasons she is unable to marry him. After some time when this affair is discovered, her brother quickly marries her off to a widower. Although she is reluctant to enter into this marriage, she nevertheless feels impelled to demonstrate her total commitment to her husband. She sincerely confesses :

*χγθρ λκσπκ] λκσπδφ πΥρ εσα ;γ ικ;κ φδ εΣα Νψ υγηα δ
φ λδρη] Νψ ικι γΣΑ γθωκ τκσ γθωκ] Χ;κγρκ δκσ ιφροζρ
κ γκσυκ πκφγ,Α μλδσ φψ;σ ιγησ μλσ ιφρ δσ*

*ιζφρ λΠπη γκσυκ πκφγ,Α λΠπη χυδρ γη λεφιΖρ γθσκ τκ
λδρκ γΣΑ² (54)*

Keeping this obligation in view, she unhesitatingly discloses the story of her first love to her husband. The effect of this honest disclosure is disastrous. Unable to appreciate her honesty of intent, the male in him rises to the fore and he sends her out of his house. Forced by the turn of circumstances, Mrinal is compelled to seek refuge in a shabby dwelling provided by a coal merchant. A daughter is born to her out of this relationship. After sometime she is again left alone as this coal merchant deserts her and goes away. The daughter also dies shortly after. Her next encounter is with a doctor's family where she makes a living by teaching the children in the family. She soon learns that her nephew Pramod's marriage has been fixed with Rajnandini in this family and decides to leave this house. She then goes to live the rest of her life among the downtrodden and the so-called 'dirt' of society.

Pramod goes to meet her there and implores her to come back and live with him. She rejects his offer of compassion and tells him that if he wanted he could give her sufficient money which she could use for the upliftment of people like her in that surrounding. He evades the issue under the pretext of incomprehension and returns home. She finally dies of some dreadful disease. Pramod, the narrator as well as spectator to the grim tragic life of his 'bua' (aunt), is so deeply affected by a sense of guilt that he resigns from his judgeship. The novel derives its title 'Tyagpatra' (resignation) from this action.

From the standpoint of individualism *Tyagpatra* can thus said to be a great revolutionary novel delineating an individual's reaction against social orthodoxy. Society never accepts the primacy of individual aspirations over social mores and norms. Through the character of Mrinal, the novelist questions the false morality of a society bound by traditions. Mrinal, who is endowed with sensitivity and compassion, fully understands that the foundations of society rest on double standards and hypocrisy rather than on logic or honesty of purpose and intent. On account of her failure to find fulfilment in her adolescent love relationship, Mrinal is prepared to accept the consequences of an ill-matched matrimony. Deprived of love as well as of a healthy

relationship in marriage, and unable to take cudgels against a hostile world, Mrinal decides to suffer in silence rather than take recourse to the easy path of ending her own life through suicide. In the process of carrying out her silent rebellion against the orthodox traditions of society, Mrinal prefers to destroy her own self. Through Mrinal's tragedy, Jainendra has tried to highlight the fact that subjecting oneself to pain and suffering in order to live for one's own convictions is an appropriate mode of protest :

*ογη τεκ γθωκ ννΖ εκυο δη εκυλ&εφ.κ γΣ] μλδσ ι
ζδκ&κ εσα εκυο δκ
ξφριΦκ μΤΤοψ γκσξκΑ³(41)*

Self-satisfaction through suffering is the natural trait of Mrinal's character. On account of the death of her parents in her childhood she remains deprived of parental love and affection. The strict discipline and excessive control she is subjected to by her sister-in-law breeds in her a feeling of dissatisfaction for life. This feeling of helplessness gives her the strength to endure suffering and pain. She in fact finds fulfilment by torturing her own self.

Even in her school days she seemed to have derived a great deal of pleasure in accepting to be beaten by her teacher for a mischief committed by her friend Sheela. Similarly, her capacity for suffering is demonstrated when she quietly accepts to get married to a widower who is no match to her. When driven out of the house by her husband for her honest confession, she does not seek help from her brother but accepts with grace and equanimity the scorn and neglect accorded to her. The pain she is wary of causing others, she gladly accepts for herself. It is this inherent strength she is endowed with that renders the sympathy, idealism, and altruism of Pramod totally ineffective. She knowingly ignores the selfishness of the coal merchant and gratefully accepts him for helping her in her hour of need. She does everything in the true spirit of sacrifice rather than paying lip-service to sacrifice as most mortals do. Whenever Pramod meets her he always finds her afloat like the lotus flower untouched by the scum of society around her. At no stage of her life, apart from the genuine love she experienced in her adolescent stage, does Mrinal display any sign of weakness, either emotional or physical. She moves from one male to another

in search of refuge but the essential strength of her character begets no hatred for her in the minds of the readers. She virtually lives for others with the remotest concern for her own good. As the protagonist of the novel, Mrinal's life is in tune with her name which means: 'stem of the Lotus'. Like the Lotus stem, Mrinal withstands and weathers the most severe storms of fate as well as the pressure of the waves of social circumstances but continues to strive to keep intact the Lotus of the social system even at the cost of her own life:

*εΣα λεκτ δκσ ρκσM+υκ & ΘκσM+υκ υγηα πκηρη
γωYA λεκτ ζωσκ ρκσ γε φδλδσ Ηκηρηφ
χυσασσ.: ;κ φδλδσ Ηκηρηφ φχξM+σασσ.: βλψψ;σ
ε Σα βρυκ γη δφ λδρη γωY φδ
λεκτ λσ πψξ γκσδφ μλδη εαξψκδκα {κκ εσα [κθν γ
η ζωσρη φγωYA⁴ (62)*

Mrinal's personality is an ideal of self-sacrifice and the sad saga of her life becomes an epitome of struggle between a woman and her fate. Her relentless fight against adversities of life, which ultimately destroy her, helps her touch the heights of tragic grandeur. Her poignant tale may not evoke any revolutionary feeling against the established traditions of society but there is a faint glimmer of hope that the sympathy, compassion and respect which her life and personality generate in the minds and hearts of the readers would persuade them to look at the likes of Mrinal, perhaps with a little less contempt.

NOTES & REFERENCES

¹Jainendra Kumar, *Tyagpatra*(1937) (rpt.New Delhi: Purvoday Prakashan,1998). Subsequent references to the text are from this edition and have been indicated by page numbers in parentheses.(Translations in English mine).

²I cannot deceive. Deception is sin. What has happened has happened. A married woman must remain devoted to her husband. Only by being true can one be truly dedicated.

³This very accumulated suppressed pain is the gem of the soul whose radiance illumines man's path to progress.

⁴I don't want to wreck society. If society breaks where shall we be? That is why all that I can do is keep on breaking myself for the well-being of society.



RAFT ON THE RIVER : MOTIFS OF DISRUPTION IN *HUCKLEBERRY FINN*

P. Laxminarayana

Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is commonly considered as a work of fiction written about "dreams and desires of childhood". Hemingway views it differently and calls it a great American classic. According to him it is a marvellous portrayal of a whole civilization. Recent criticism is of the view that *Huckleberry Finn* is a profound study underlying the issues of larger human significance. Mark Twain (1992:2) in his prefatory note observes :

Although my book is intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to try pleasantly to remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in.

The structure of *Huckleberry Finn* is based on an inbuilt contrariety and opposition. The river as an operative motive creates a deep disruption. As a metaphor of fluidity it subverts the hard and oppressive discourses. Twain creates an encounter between the institution of slavery and the unbounded freedom of the river Mississippi. Slavery as a stagnant and antihuman condition is pitted against the free and unimpeded flow of life, symbolised by the river. Since the river claims a larger space of the novel, T.S. Eliot (1983 : 332) pays a great tribute to its timeless mystique:

The river gives the book its form. But for the river, the book might be only a sequence of adventures with a happy ending. A River, a very big and powerful river is only the natural force that can wholly determine the course of human peregrination.

Lionel Trilling echoes the same sentiments of adoration. He finds the river not only a primordial power but also a divine

spirit shaping human destiny. Leo Marx (1983: 342-343), on the contrary, strips the river of its romantic aura and equates it with a diabolic power. He tries to decentre its privileged position:

I do not see that it means much to talk about the river as a god in this novel. The river's connection with this high aspiration for man is that it provides a means of escape, a place where the code can be tested. The truly profound meanings of the novel are generated by the impingement of the actual world of slavery, feuds, lynching, murder, and a spurious Christian morality upon the ideal of the raft.

In continuation of the anti-romantic tradition modern scholarship considers the novel *Huckleberry Finn* as an existential study dealing with the deeper issues of freedom and choice. According to Millicent Bell (1985 : 291–292):

No work may be more existential perhaps than this one which seems to exhibit its hero as submitting to its process by which the self far from seeking and attaining new forms is subjected to a perilous sequence of break-downs.

Now, in the light of a wide spectrum of contemporary critical theories there could be alternative ways of reading *Huckleberry Finn*. The recent theories open up a host of new perspectives wherein, particularly, the river can be viewed as a flowing signifier undermining the paradigms of power. As an unbroken flow the river never allows a static and stagnant sense of reality. It destabilises the difference between the binary opposites.

The association of Huck and Jim distorts, black/white, child/adult opposition. It also problematises freedom/slavery, life/death binaries. The violent energy of the river resists a reductive understanding. As a perpetual mode of motion the river is self-subversive. It is both a life-sustainer and a dark death dealer. Hence, the qualities of benevolence and divinity associated with the river cannot be maintained. Further, the river presents itself as a theatre of violence. Huck's hazardous journey is towards unknown destinations. He happens to witness murders, machinations, feuds and villainy. The child sensibilities are strained, his innocence is murdered. The river unfolds the sordid human drama.

Huck's consciousness is coloured by horror and violence. It is a journey from innocence to evil. The child by imbibing the adult values gets perfected in the art of lying. Huck changes his identity. He is now Jackson, familiar with the grammar of the world. He escapes into the trappings of the adult world. The river is no more a highway to freedom, but it is a drift towards bondage and spiritual slavery - an enslavement of soul.

The question remains whether Huck has achieved life or death on the river. Huck escapes from home whereas Jim is in search of home. The categories of freedom and slavery are thus problematised with the river creating the absurdity of the whole enterprise. It is no more a linear progression resulting in the moral evolution of the protagonist, but a state of regress and reversion that disturbs our notions and assumptions. Huck says: "It was a monstrous big river down there" (Twain 1992 : 298).

Jim's search for freedom through the benign agency of the river is deeply betrayed. He drifts past Cairo. The much awaited destination of freedom eludes him. The fog of uncertainty surrounds Huck and Jim.

The raft on the river represents an image of human conditions and wreckage of life. It is a precarious balance between life and death with the unaccommodated man caught up in the dark waters of the Mississippi. It is a journey towards a dreadful freedom. Leo Marx (Ibidem: 347-348) aptly comments :

These impotencies on the raft correspond to the innocent helplessness of its occupants. Unresisted, the rogues invade and take over the raft. Though, it is the symbolic locus of the novel's central affirmations, the raft provides an uncertain and indeed precarious mode of travelling toward freedom.

The uncertainty on the river and the illogic on the bank leaves Huck with a baffled sense of reality. He confronts both cosmic chaos and cultural mess. The lives of Huck and Jim are threatened from all around.

There is a built-in disruptivity in Twain's fiction. He uses the comic mode to undermine the rigid structures of power. In

order to confront the lurid American reality he uses laughter as an appropriate mode of subversion. Twain, in the 'preface', clearly mentions his anti-structural attitude. Hence, the playful comedy becomes a creative mode of exploding absurdity: "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."

As an agency of disruption the river interfuses borders and boundaries, and, thereby problematises the contemporary reality. As a cultural symbol Mississippi stands for the uncontrollable American spirit ever on the move. In spite of the encircling darkness of uncertainty there is still a heroic attempt to light out for the uncharted territories ahead.

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TECHNOLOGY AND DYSTOPIA

Bhavna Goyal

For centuries Technology and the Humanities have always moved together in perfect harmony like the proverbial two wheels of a chariot. This balance was, however, disturbed by the advent of the machines which gave life its present run-away aspect. A century ago (in 1897) H.G. Wells wrote that the world had changed more in one century than it had done in the previous five hundred years and that the 'continually accelerated' change would make the reign of 'Victoria the good' seem like 'an almost incredible vision of idyllic tranquil days in the year 2100 when London, he visualized, would be all stone, asphalt, roar of machines, aeroplanes, and turbines. Wells drew analogies between the hectic pace of life in 2100 A. D. and a 'catastrophic product' like a cyclone or a planetary collision.¹

The breath-taking pace with which technology has progressed makes science fiction look like a statement of fact. *The Time Machine* of H.G. Wells is a brilliant fantasy. He himself had not imagined that some day scientists---not just parapsychologists or hypnotists but physicists like Frank Trippler, John Gribbon, Stephen Hawking et al. would be seriously working on 'travel in time'. May be they would succeed some day in exploring this fourth dimension. Who knows?

The news of the discovery of the pistol star, which is estimated to be hundreds of times bigger than the sun and which releases as much energy in six seconds as the sun does in a year, marked a breakthrough in the cure (through gene therapy) of such dreaded diseases as cancer and Alzheimers, even a cure for Monday morning blues. Likewise, a British project is underway to build an optophone – an appliance that turns light into sound to help the blind to see with their ears; a quantum key invented by the British telecom can foil eavesdroppers' attempt to intercept

sensitive information; Andy Green driving the jet-engined British Thrust Supersonic Car broke the sound barrier twice at a speed of 1200 plus kph; TV screens that can hang on the wall, a car made of soyabean, a cyber-fashion-athlete suit that exhibits a runner's heart rate, body temperature and speed, a 'firefly' dress made of electricity conducting organza decorated with a spray of tiny, motionless lights which flicker with the wearer's every move, and cyber-shopping making it possible to bring home the weekly groceries in seven minutes flat, are things that perplex the mind and make it wonder: "We've Come pretty far, but who dare say/ If it be forward or astray."²

Schumackiev in his illuminating essay 'technology with a human face' opines that technology, though a product of man, tends to develop by its own laws and principles which are very different from those of human nature or of living nature in general. Nature always, so to speak, knows when and where to stop. Greater even than the mystery of natural growth is the mystery of natural cessation of growth. As a result, the system of nature of which man is a part tends to be self-balancing, self-adjusting, self-cleansing; but it is not so with technology which requires no self-limiting principles. In the subtle system of nature, technology and the super-technology of the modern world act like foreign bodies and display numerous signs of rejection. There are, says Schumackiev, "prophecies of disaster" and indeed visible signs of disaster.³

Gone are the days of rosy utopias when writers blissfully travelled in imaginary idyllic worlds untouched by problems. Utopia, as the word connotes, is mental debauchery. Since Thomas More who in the 15th century gave his imaginary world a name and a local habitation, literary utopias had a hey-day of popularity till the advent of the machine-age. Golden dreams began to assume nightmarish dimensions. There is more or less the same difference between a utopia and a negative utopia or dystopia as between facile optimism and serious pessimism. In the Victorian age, the lone defender of machines in Butler's *Erewhon* correctly argues that machines lend strength and assistance in the form of extra-corporal limits. But Butler also had perceived that the incipient technology would rapidly grow in power and

complexity, ultimately reaching a stage in its development when whole societies might be bent to its subservience.

The unprecedented technological boom has intrinsic to it the two dangerous elements of 'everything faster and more of everything'. No wonder that thinkers as well as creative writers are compelled to speculate about the future of mankind. During the present century there have been a plethora of books - fictional and non-fictional - devoted to technological forecasting. A whole discipline 'named' futurology has emerged on the academic horizon. Almost all such works are a record of modern man's bafflement at the complexities of a technologically monitored civilization and the not wholly baseless fear of its catastrophic finale.

H.G. Wells (who stands midway between traditional utopia and modern negative utopia) in his novel *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) pictured a war-wasted world where crudely clad Neanderthals fight with club and spear among the mute ruins of a wrecked technological civilization. Finally this world is redeemed by a glitteringly dressed group of scientists who having withdrawn a few decades before to some remote Eurasian wastes to build a rational civilization, now fly back and, with super weapons of their own invention, impose universal peace on the bickering nations of the world.

Two outstanding models of dystopias are George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. The former was written in 1948 and is primarily a political fantasy. Yet the big brother there is ever watchful and all his double speak are possible mainly because he wields tremendous technological power. Huxley's *Brave New World* with its topiary scientists and oviparous creatures is primarily a bio-technological nightmare – "the air conditioned nightmare" as H. Miller calls it. The year is A.-F 632. A.-F stands for After Ford. As the prospect of mass production, by which the state now rears its children, Ford has replaced God in the government-sponsored religious mythology. Citizens are kept young and healthy by science and hefty by the combination of state controlled entertainment with 3-D coloured talking pictures with odour and tactile sensations, compulsory sex and soma. Soma is a tranquilizing drug that provides escape from reality without unpleasant after-effects. 'Mother' has become an obscene word. 'Pneumatic' girls

chew sex hormones, wear malthusean belts to carry contraceptives, dance the fine steps to the wails of saxophones, and worry about their mental health whenever they find themselves becoming overly fond of one man. Its citizens are hefty and good in a way an infant or two is happy and good.

Technology has come to stay and can not be wished away. What is required is its proper harnessing. It should not be allowed to run away with the notion that all science is amoral. Human welfare should be the criterion. Why not in our own interest put some voluntary restraint on the mad race for armament and hectic pursuit of material gains? Why let things ride man? Let there be more of technology - but value based technology. Who knows it may be technology that in future may resolve the many metaphysical and spiritual enigmas that continue to baffle human mind. Einstein is alleged to have planned to prove the existence of God through higher Mathematics. May be it is through technology that some day utopias turn into realities and negative utopias turn out to be just fantastic nightmares.

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POLITICS AND COMMUNALISM : A MANAGERIAL PROFILE

A.P. Maheshwari

Historical Perspective

India has been a pluralistic society with a grand synthesis of cultures, religions and languages of people belonging to different castes and communities. It has upheld its cohesiveness despite foreign invasions, such as the Mughal and the British rule. The emergence of egalitarian social relations has been hampered by many frictional elements, yet India remained a unique mosaic of various cultures. The concepts of normative order called 'Dharma', the personal moral commitment via 'Karma' and hierarchical social stratification through 'Jati' (caste system) are basic to this cultural mosaic. A certain level of perspective and equilibrium has been attained and maintained through varying degrees of holistic configurations. Social and cultural changes reflect the trends of absorption and assimilation. Aryans and Dravidians lived together. Hindus and Muslims lived in close proximity and later on the Christians too became a part of this composite culture. Diversity is reflected in thousands of caste groups each having its rituals, rites, rules and customs. But there are many variations, which can be seen in terms of linguistic, religious or ethnic base. It is, however, not simply esoteric in nature since through many centuries good rulers and administrators have focused upon the need for harmony in order to attain stability whereas opportunists have exploited the differences to promote their own ulterior motives and vested interests.

The Post-Independence Scenario

The post Independence period with regard to communal riots has its own story to narrate. We find that till 1950 the riots had generally been sudden and spontaneous. The riots of 1960s and after are, at times, found systematically engineered by vested interests for political and economic

power. In the decade 1950-1960, the general political stability along with the factors of economic and social development contributed a bit in diverting the focus away from communal frenzy and we find a comparatively peaceful environment during this period. The mutual prejudices and conflict levels accentuated thereafter with the political bickering fanning the communal sentiments. Another factor was the waning nationalistic feeling. The feeling of Muslim aggression over Hindu culture and religion, the separatist role played by Muslims, resistance of Muslims to the common civil code and other related matters, indirect alignment of Muslims towards their community beyond national borders etc. re-emerged on the Hindu psyche and the prejudices strongly resurfaced. Similarly, the Muslims developed prejudices of alleged discrimination, conspiracy of Hindus to commit genocide on Muslims and the feeling of deprivation. Whereas Hindus made attempts to see their culture as supreme, the Muslims too had receded in their positive response patterns for lack of preparedness and sufficient educational advancement/ modernization.

The incidents of communal violence showed an upward trend in the 1960s and early seventies. Riots broke out in Kashmir in 1963 over the theft of a holy relic from the Hazratbal mosque. The year 1964 witnessed a series of riots in eastern Indian towns like Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Ranchi, Rourkela etc. The Indo-Pak war in Kutch in 1965 followed by the Bangladesh war in 1971 conditioned the mood of the majority community who were concerned about the placement of Muslims at sensitive places. Refugees from Bangladesh and Western Pakistan added fuel to the fire. The country again suffered riots in Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Aligarh, Bhiwandi and other towns. During the period 1971-80, the political parties looked for new strategies to dethrone the ruling Congress party. Caste and religion based politics started surfacing. Populist slogans and religious considerations became common tools to woo the minorities. Muslim Personal Law Board was formed to protect the personal law based on *Shari'ah*. Hindus started demanding the Uniform Civil Code. After 1977, the Shah-Bano case, Meenakshipuram conversions, opening of Babri Masjid for Hindus etc. brought fundamentalism to the fore. Mandal to anti-Mandal contest for social justice changed the national

political scene. The new brokers of vote bank emerged giving rise to competitive communalism where the aggressiveness of the minorities even for the just cause could be misconstrued. In order to break the communal hold of the political parties, a few regional leaders also played caste cards to woo away the lower castes, leaving the upper castes to their own fate.

The decade 1990-2000 has been marred by various oscillations due to 'politico-criminal-communal' nexus and 'suit thy interest' partnerships on political front to remain in power. The "vote-bank" approach dominated the political scene which has strong empirical evidence in the post-partition period. The riots consequent to Babri Masjid--Ram Janambhumi controversy and demolition of the structure is a good example in this regard. The Bombay bomb blasts in 1993 were the result of deep-rooted communal and criminal nexus with pent-up political overtones. Riots in the area were marked by stabbing, looting and arson. The loss of human life and property was beyond imagination. The Bombay blasts brought to the fore the various political--criminal-communal nexus involving local, national as well as international dimensions and the networking of 'dons' operating from distant places through remote mechanism. The election years have also revealed a sudden jump in communal violence and brutality as well as death tolls. K.N. Panikkar's observation in this regard is quite relevant in understanding the crux of the whole political vector :

The communal mobilisation of the past two decades has mainly anchored its strategies on the irrational and the repressive, marginalising the issues of material import and privileging the religious and the sentimental by invoking symbols associated with quotidian practices. Coercion, both emotional and physical, rather than consensus has been the key to their politics, which among many other debilities, has led to an unprecedented brutalization and insensitivity in society. No better soil is needed for fascism to thrive.¹

In the post Independence era, one finds that ruling parties have, more often than not, taken the lead in dishonestly using religion to adulterate the polity. They have espoused

secularism while dividing communities in the name of minority protection. The assertion to Hindu religion has emerged as a reaction to these policies. A few observe that the communal feeling has abetted religious rivalry. The ideal situation, however, is that no one has the right to presume the superiority of his faith and barge into a peaceful community or uproot it from its traditional culture and create a religious conflict.

Another important factor which has adversely affected Indian society is that the fruits of economic development could not equitably reach all the people. Pockets of underprivileged, uneducated and unemployed people have sprung up in almost all the cities. This disproportionate prosperity has resulted in social tensions. Social stress is evidenced when people belonging to one religious group suffer from more economic backwardness than the other. The first few elections were fought on political agenda but the plurality in the political field and invincibility of the then ruling party led some of the politicians to resort to religious and caste appeals.

Political Dimensions

It may be asserted at the very outset that socio-cultural pluralism in a multi-ethnic/multi-racial society does not *per se* lead to communalism. However, as a general hypothesis it can be proposed, *inter alia*, that such societies have high propensities or potentials for exploitation when there exist multiple socio-political contradictions as is the case with most of the third world countries. Communalism in such circumstances is a consciousness guided by political allegiance and supported by a programme of political action.

It is interesting to note that the genesis of the problem does not purely lie in caste relationships or religious grouping but is an integral part of a larger milieu created by rulers before and after independence. We have social scientists either explaining it in terms of Muslim separatism/resurgence of Muslim communal ideology or in terms of Hindu ideology of Hindu *Rashtra* coupled with anti-Muslim stance of RSS/BJP. This kind of approach has been a colonial legacy where British viewed every incident of inter-ethnic or class conflict as communal (one may cite the examples of Moplah rebellion of 1921, Bombay riot of 1928, Kanpur riot of 1931).

Historians like D.D.Kosambi observe that ethnocentric orientation is not a permanent reality, rather it is a variable based more on material conditions of society.² Imtiaz Ahmad emphasises that the rise of radical political consciousness in the latter half of 19th century produced the emergence of Muslims as an articulate 'closed' or 'solitary group' which was strengthened during partition and after.³

It would not be out of place here to refer to a brief analysis of British or colonial politics. The British found it easy to enforce the policy of divide and rule as there was something in the internal social, economic, cultural and political conditions of Indian society which favoured its success. The then prevalent conditions on Indian soil made it easy for official policy to play on the latent antagonism and build upon them a whole political system. The British role became crucial as they held state power which was a necessary determinant of the political fortunes. Promotion of communalism could easily thwart the rising nationalism in the garb of protecting the minority besides giving legitimacy to colonial politics. It may be mentioned that communalism was only one of the tools of divide-and-rule policy. They did not favour any particular community. Their aim was to check the process of politicization and unification of the Indian process of 'Nation-in-making'. This was attained through short term administrative policies.

It was also contemplated by the British that communalism should not be permitted to become a popular force that could turn against the government itself, hence they gave support to weaker forces of communalism i.e. Muslim communalism got more support but it was done in a very subtle way to avoid causing annoyance to the Hindu communalists. The policy allowed room for varying permutations and combinations suiting the situation at a point of time. They did not seem to have any commitment for any form of communalism. It was more of a convenience to serve their own political ends. This was done with all the power of the state which is a major catalyst for economic, social and political development. The importance of the role of state can also be seen from the angle that in the post independence era when we enshrined the ideals of secularism in the Indian Constitution, communalism has been kept under check despite majority of administrators or

Hindu elite responding positively to Hindu communalism. The role of state generally emerged as vacillatory, accommodating and compromising.

Holistics Of Secularism In India

Secularism is not a static concept. It is a progressive ideology tangential to the circumstances in the society, the level of civic values and the power of tolerance at a given point of time. The spirit of secularism can be better understood by elaborating what is not secular rather than defining what is secular. Whenever people work in a group, difference of opinion and approach is bound to be there. The situation of difference would be more complex when we view it at the macro level of a society. Even the most homogeneous societies are marked with differences amongst various groups and the group members or the people. The quest for secularism arises when it is no longer possible to cater to the demands placed by diversity of religious interests or the dominance of one over the other.

Secular principles develop over a period of time under mutually opposite pressures from the orthodox and the oppressed minority. Secularism intends to achieve long term stable conditions for perpetual justice for all religious entities or people of different faith. It does not support any coercion through legal or extra legal methods to create such a situation; it neither calls for a compromise or adjudication which would be too short to survive, nor does it foresee any stage of superficial or abstract neutrality which would be susceptible to manipulation by dominant groups. The state may be secular, but people may be intolerant ; in the same way the state may be patronising any religion but the people may be tolerant and civil. In the Indian context we find that Hinduism developed an over-structured hierarchical caste system and unequal relationship which led to maldistribution of resources over a long period of time. Over-structuring led to resistance and defiance. Hinduism broke into a plethora of practices, interpretations, rituals, sects and beliefs. Processes of disintegration and revivalism/reforms took place to regain the lost status. The new thoughts got new people, new people established new power circles and new variables for social and political control. Proponents of Hinduism project a future India similar to "Ram-Rajya" in which Hinduism would be the official religion but equal status

and treatment shall be granted and guaranteed to all other religions. Such a projection is discounted by minorities. Indian Muslims are very large in number, other minorities like Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Christians have important shrines and establishments. The idea that the Indian state belongs only to the Hindus is unrealistic from a holistic view. Secularism is certainly not a non-discriminatory tolerance of others' faith or permissive survival of other religions. In fact, there should be no appropriation in favour of one faith to the exclusion of others. Three important features of the Indian Constitution indicate the nature of secularism adopted by us:

1. Principle of religious freedom.
2. Participatory secular state which would neutrally assist and celebrate all faiths.
3. Social welfare orientation and reformatory justice.

The formula of public order, health and morality was devised to check the oscillation of religious practice and the powers given to the executive which were subject to judicial scrutiny and interpretations. The State was also given the power to check unjust religious practices. The wide power given through the third principle was based on the presumed state of fraternity. It was not intended to arm any political party in power. The second principle too provided some scope of direction to the executive arm of the state. These principles may, *per se*, appear contradictory to the first principle.

The impact of these provisions was seen when social reform legislations, at a later stage, used criminal law techniques and penal measures to usher in the required social change. Indian plans adopted 'law and development' approach to materialize the aim of making a compatible society. Partition memories were too pathetic. The new state tried to amalgamate all the provinces in unified stream and the policy of consensus found its way alongside. However, the religious institutions and trusts/shrines etc. were subjected to increasing state control. The courts gave verdicts in all the disputed religious practices and gave widest possible secularistic interpretations on the doctrine of 'essential religious practices' which was the core of the right to religious practices. Decisions in case of Nathdwara temple, management of Dargah of Ajmer, slaughter of cows by Muslims etc. may be cited in this context.

Leadership Trends

The political leadership in any system is of crucial import as it decides the ideologies for other systems. The valueless orientation led to politics of convenience and manipulative electoral alliances. The caste based communal trends set in more strongly. It can also be observed that the nationalization moves under the garb of welfare orientation became a casualty in the hands of corrupt bureaucracy and the political masters. The strategies of planned growth, socialistic patterns, and self reliance could not give desirable results partly due to environmental constraints and partly due to the defective instruments of action.

The political leadership has been a failure to the extent that only a tiny segment of concerned citizens now feel the need to change the political system. The purpose of the above narration is to bring home the point that the failure of political leadership resulted in social and economic failures, thereby giving way to the much dreaded old psychological and behavioural expressions on communal lines similar to what existed before independence. The ideological degeneration has been so acute that besides making a mockery of measures in the direction of population control or human resource development, it broke the backbone of leadership at various levels up to the smallest micro unit, may it be leadership at village level, community level or family level, with much less scope left for institutional leadership of any kind.

However, all was not lost. There have been selective leaders who have stuck to positive themes. Consequently, the system had the opportunity of surviving against odds. Some such positive trends can be seen as --- a) Protection of minority and weaker sections. b) Substantial progress in the field of science and technology (space, agriculture, industries).Thrust on higher education, research and development and d) Positive handling of international affairs and strategic interests.

Towards Problem Solutions:**(A) Prevalent Methods**

In the situation of communal responses, the methods used by the 'society-managers' or 'administrators' testify the efficacy of the laid down strategies. The given strategies which are situation-specific and quite viable include :

Use of fear–psychosis.

Dissemination through information network.

Mitigating cognitive dissonance.

Peer-group influence.

Cooperative approach; Cultural intermixing and widening the horizon through education.

Generating situations of happy experiences.

(B) Evolving Correct Managerial Drives

1. Need for a shift from 'hi-tech' to 'high-touch' leadership leading to the enrichment of structures and technology by human consciousness.
2. Augmenting qualities like cooperation and sympathy which are much needed as a balancing factor.
3. Building of institutions for people whereby they can replenish themselves and reclaim their cultural/spiritual heritage.
4. Initiation of value-based transformation of people.
5. Establishing harmony among human beings and evolving equilibrium between human beings and nature.
6. Cultivating collective ethos with value group efforts and group rewards.
7. Importing structures, systems and values of the global community only to the extent they are not incompatible with the human values and the basic dynamics of Indian soil.
8. Fostering unity in diversity.
9. Developing attributes like dynamism, vision, ethical values, inspiring character and spiritual strength in the making of an effective leader.

10. Effective leadership communication.

(C) Identifying Change Catalysts

It is imperative to identify the change catalysts along with their inherent potentials. The basis of intervention may be power, economic hold, friendship or partnership. The psychological consequence could be seen, respectively, in terms of dependence, reliance, participation or self-discipline. Need-fulfilment formats could take the shape of subsistence, security, status or self-actualisation. Thus various determinants of human behaviour and their functional implications, as elaborated by management practitioners, do help us in managing social situations too in a better problem-solving paradigm. The change catalysts could emerge from family, peer groups, schools, social institutions, NGOs, public leaders, mass-media grid, religious leaders, distinguished experts, referent agents, agents of law, and state functionaries.

(D) Focus On Plausible Strategies

Six significant strategies may be developed on the basis of management experiences and intrinsic strength of the workable concepts :

1. Development based strategies focussing on economic and social transformation from a managerial perspective.
2. Mass communication based strategies enveloping the social cognitions, learning patterns and operant conditioning for suitable human responses.
3. Interactive strategies aiming at higher level congruencies through various formats of socio-cultural fusion.
4. Intervention strategies based on the 'competence' and 'compatibility' of the third party (either state functionaries or joint committee of the various communities).
5. Legalistic strategies in the form of laws and regulations.
6. Integrated approach with the focus on the holistic networking and harmonious blending of all the available 'solution-parameters', on the basis of situation-specific appropriate dosage.

The approach, as identified above, has its own effectiveness. The arguments can be seen as under:

1. Development, more so the economic development, has got strong linkage effects. In the world that exists today, development would mean better quality of life with increased networking. With the enhancement in the the level of awareness and education, the holistic synergies are likely to create a wisdom that would naturally change the perceptions and attitudes over a period of time. Even cultural integration would develop new facets with techno-economic progress and free competition. Interdependence has increased the world over. Now there is a strong binding force and the specifics of mutual economic sustenance dissuade them from resorting to any disruptive activity as it would then be a 'lose-lose situation'. This is true to a great extent. As the gap of economic disparity gets bridged, the comparative hold of one over the other gets diluted. There may not be complete positive correlation between the economic progress and the absence of communal riots. Facts suggest that lack of economic progress may no longer serve as a convenient excuse for communal leaders and fundamentalists who wish to exploit the sentiments of masses by projecting the picture of an 'imagined enemy'.

2. With increasing awareness and command over the means of economic sustenance, the capability of people to judge political ideologies and make a choice would also undergo a positive change. The appropriate choice of a political ideology is crucial as it gives directions to the national efforts and decides the destiny of the millions. Political exploitation in the name of 'half-truths' or "divide and rule" is likely to get a setback.

3. Many scholars have focussed on the point of capability deprivation and inequitable access to opportunities in an underdeveloped system. With proper economic advancement and with well managed linkage effects, the new realities are likely to erase the superficial realities of the past, particularly those emanating from historical distortions.

4. Conflict is inevitable. The pressures of the environment, the process of change and the dynamics of group functioning are all critical fields. Incongruencies and inconsistencies would give rise to latent or open conflict. The point relevant here is that the formats of the conflict and the dimensions of conflict resolution would change for the better. The cultural factors may throw a challenge but the process

of development would throw open better opportunities and synergetic strength to tackle them in a better way to ensure a higher degree of stability. There would, thus, be lesser breeding ground for distortions.

5. What binds the chords of human life are its values. The values may be perceived as personal, work-related, time-related, risk-related or aggregate cultural values. The approach in question harps on the strength that the various human values would also undergo a change such that the net quality of life would witness an upward swing.

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**THE CON(TEXTUAL) CONTOURS OF LAJJA:
A RE(VISIONING) OF THE SOCIAL PRAXIS
IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT**

Nishamani Kar

*We are not merely more weary because of
yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were
before the calamity of yesterday. -- Samuel Beckett,
Proust.*

In the Indian subcontinent today we come across the prevalence of at least three major societal systems: a different ordering of the social values leading to different priorities in personal and community life. Such social systems are : (a) the modern West (the current face of humanism), (b) the absorptionist or mystic society, (c) the community society, and, ironically enough, each of them embodies values fundamentally opposed to each other and it so happens that the said conflict of values is traceable through all fields of human endeavour. However, the present day social praxis in the Indian subcontinent belongs to the last category -- the macro social system which engenders strong feelings of solidarity and fraternity amongst the believers with the society developing a quasi-ontological reality of its own, and in the least analysis taking precedence over the individual. This type of society has a tendency towards exclusionism in that those outside the circle of believers are not taken lightly. Eventually, the covert or overt aspiration of those subscribing to such a value system is to occupy the entire space and therefore anyone outside the frame is either converted through persuasion or tactical pressure, or he can be thrown out penalized, or perhaps killed without any mercy. This absolute assertion of faith is also contingent upon insecurity, lack of proper confidence in the faith itself, because of the threatening presence of 'the other' in the same field (Gunn 176). History, in this

perspective, reveals itself not so much as an evolutionary progression, but a see-saw of alternate victories and defeats for competing value systems. Taslima Nasreen in her major work *Lajja* uses the aforesaid model to analyze the macro-conflicts she observes in the subcontinent through the exploration of the micro-dimension of such a conflict in the fragmented, homogenized and functionally differentiated Bangla society, which promotes, as it appears, the cause of a self-reflexive dystopia. She makes an attempt to construct the fictive world in which the events unfold thus to pave the way for a socio-historical enactment of what constitutes 'reality' for the contending communities. In this paper the objective is to re-read *Lajja* with a view to bringing out its contemporary social and historical significance.

I

It is a sociological truth that when identities develop larger territorial dimensions or intensity, or when individuals experience restlessness, group associations develop distorted features and tend to flare up in uncontrollable forms (Johnson 496). One of the worst affected by this process was the Hindu-Muslim relationship in which the old balances and patterns were disrupted, leading to mistrust and suspicion on a larger scale. Nevertheless, the Hindu-Muslim conflict can be perceived embryonically as an unforeseen off-shoot of the British civilizational interference in the Indian subcontinent, which created the scope for some deliberately political exploitation later. The partition moreover bequeathed a confused legacy to both successor states, as the two nation theory failed to manifest in a clear-cut division along the communal lines. The inter-personal moral order that Gandhi had envisioned as the basis of national life receded under the impact of communal frenzy. The society, inevitably, sacrificed what the Mahatma would assert, 'the common moral space' in which all religious and non-religious systems must participate.

II

However, soon after the cataclysm of the partition and communal frenzy thereof, the Indian society adopted the multi-religious secularism and it endeavoured to integrate the communities -- Christians, Jews and Muslims - within the logic of its group structure. It was possible for them to adopt

to this society because their distinctive community structure was not threatened -- they were/are however respected as distinct groups amongst other groups. The penchant for cooperation and adaptability of the host society thus occasioned the gradual evolution of a shared life. But in recent years the cutting edge of monotheistic dualism or absorptive Hinduism remains susceptible to activation (may be, in the service of political, economic and other ends) leading to a catastrophic disintegration of the established social modes of intercourse.

III

The history of Bangladesh, however, proves to be a continuous series of victories and defeats, punctuated by stages of impasse or mutual frustration, after which the value systems have revived in new forms. The retreat of British imperialism has spelt the defeat of individualism; the forced ouster of Pakistan army in 1971 and the independence thereof has also rung the death-knell of Jinnah's dream of a separate Muslim nation. The steps taken by the rulers (both civil and military), thereafter, have crystallized clear-cut ideological camps asserting opposite values. The initial attempt by Mujibur Rehman to transform Bangladesh into a non-communal and secular society ('Sonar Bangla') through appropriate educational and legislative measures has failed to woo the majority. Inevitably, the decision-makers have found themselves faced with unforeseen difficulties. The democratic, electoral political system, functioning within a multi-religious society has become vulnerable to irrepressible populism with potentially explosive consequences. The strong anti-religious orientation of the educational programme and the deculturing modes of mass entertainment have driven the Bangla society over the years, as it appears, towards at least a negative secularism (of course, in contravention of the earlier vouchsafed ideals), that is towards non-belief or hedonism, instead of towards a positive interpretation of humanism. Such a decline in the common psyche has been responsible for the emergence of a new era of conflict perpetrated and fanned by Islamic fundamentalism.

Conflict and religious rancour, thus occasioned, has led to a crisis and the minorities (especially the Hindus) have failed to negotiate with such intractable complex emergencies.

They remain marginalised. The human costs in terms of lives lost and innocent suffering continues to be extremely high. Democracy has proved to be a mockery. An inept administration and self-seeking leaders contribute to the canker, but it is for the non-partisan and forward-looking sections within the macro society to redress and recuperate the situation. But the modernizers redefine tradition to suit modern conditions, and it is the more radical, aggressive and defensive responses to enforced modernization that helps to provoke the communal conundrum. Further, the reaction of the conservatives appears unethical, irrational and at times reactionary. The professional politicians with narrow short-term interests go slow on tight-rope walking. Inevitably, there is the scope for an imbalanced and unstable triangle of forces emerging from a disturbed and conflictualized society.

Ironically enough the leaders in both communities (Hindu and Muslim), who have scripted their careers around the schism, play their respective roles on either side of the divide. Cocooned as they are in the narrow by-lane of their myopic interests, they would not like to venture out of their limited principality, lest they should lose their hegemony over a few. As for the Jamat-i-Islami (the leading community-friendly group), they are so hung up on being politically correct all the time that whenever such outrages take place they think that blaming the party in power alone is enough. The administration may have goofed on several fronts, but why cannot those who claim to be committed to upholding the cause of peace try and evolve at least an informal mechanism to resolve the issue? It so appears, and Taslima has rightly articulated it, that no one is really serious about resolving the crisis. A demonstration or even a casual protest merely reflects an apathetic concern. The victims are always there to accept their lot. It is widely seen and often experienced that the managers of communal frenzy and rancour go scot-free and the common populace, represented here by the Duttas, are at the receiving end. In the Preface, Taslima admits thus:

I detest fundamentalism and communalism. This was the reason I wrote Lajja . . . (which) deals with the persecution of Hindus, a religious minority in Bangladesh by the Muslims who are in the majority ... Lajja is a document of our collective defeat (p. ix).

IV

The Duttas in the fictive world of *Lajja* are made an isolated lot, removed from the prevalent reality, the general ethos. They belong nowhere, not to the Hindu world outside, nor to the predominantly Muslim world of Bangladesh either. They have no roots to claim. Their loyalties always remain questionable; not necessarily because of what they do, but because of what they are expected to do; they represent an alien race whose interests lie outside of Bangladesh. Their fate is tied up to the fate of Bangla society, which never accepts them as its natural integral ingredient. They are, as it were, the victims of cumulative historical deprivation.

Taslima's tongue-in-cheek rancour gravitates against such a deprivation. She appears to uphold the cause of a just political order championing the commitments of a constitutional system with a strong emphasis in the pursuit of formal equality of all and even-handed application of law. She admits her "determination to continue the battle against religious persecution, genocide and communalism"(p. ix). She reminds us of the games politicians have played with both the communities on either side of the fence from time to time and the communal passions thus whipped up by them to suit their politics of self-interest based on hatred. But these games would not have succeeded to the extent they did, if the Hindus and the Muslims had known each other better, if they had grown together from childhood as one community rather than two separate worlds within one nation, within the subcontinent. Taslima declares unequivocally: "I for one will not be silenced" (p. x). She refers to the "demolition of the sixteenth century edifice, which had struck a savage blow to the sentiments of Muslims in India and elsewhere" (p.3). In order to corroborate her point-of-view she quotes the newspaper report : "a malignant situation has taken form in India, the pain caused by it will be felt all over the world and most certainly by her immediate neighbours" (p. 3).

Further, as per her estimation, what was going on in India was small change compared to what was happening in Dhaka : plenty of violence -- killing and looting, the Hindu shrines are set on fire, the Hindu households are torched, giving way to a pervading sense of macabre. The Hindu minority are mere spectators, the victims of genocide.

Dhaka is already a kind of microcosm of Bangladesh as a whole: a new centre-less city, in which the contending communities and the various classes have lost touch with each other because each is isolated in its own geographical, and even psychic, compartment. What then has become of the social dynamics, the historical and the dialectic in such a schema? The group dynamics has been obliterated, history faces a premature collapse and the dialectic has simply been displaced -- and it is this very displacement that informs what is paradoxical about our times. No longer attached to temporality, no longer clinging to historicity or the temporal mechanics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, the dialectic is to be resumed and recognized in the real, effective contradictions of space (Murphet 201).

V

The Duttas, no matter how solitary, are still somehow engaged in the social substance, their very solitude being social. In search of their self identity, they face a Sisyphean situation with every attempt in the appropriate direction resulting in absurdity. They face a series of unreconciled cross-purposes, which get heightened as they confront the dominant social ethos. They, inevitably, remain 'the other' in their own homeland, and, therefore, the cry for a relationship of reciprocal co-equality is denied to them.

There is often a sustained plea for conversion. Love fails to entice. Marriages remain conditional. Suranjan's love for Parveen is questioned. He is asked to convert before marriage. When Maya escapes into Parul's house on the eve of the communal rancour and at the thick of frenzy, she does not find a good time there, the haunting eyes of the visitors often taunt her. Belal comes all the way to console Suranjan and the Duttas, but in the course of conversation he also gives vent to his pent-up emotion. He says:

*I really don't know what is happening all around us.
... meanwhile in India, they are continuously killing us.
What do you mean by 'us' ? Birupaksha asked.
Muslims.
Oh, I see.*

When they get such news from India, these people naturally lose their heads. Whom can you blame? We are dying there, and you here...(p. 171)

The point here is Belal's apparent sympathy, but on an implicit plane he also discovers a reason behind such a nefarious act. His rational self identifies with Suranjan, but at the back of his mind, his communal self derives vicarious pleasure out of his friend's suffering. It is a typical situation; as if the stimulation of ceaseless differentiation promotes the accelerating commodification of social relations and the obliteration of moral relationship with 'the other'. It speaks of a new realm of barbarity which receives their (Belal's, Haider's, Kamal's - all friends to Surajan) tacit consent, without provoking any resistance. Even the elders who were swearing earlier in the name of secularism, keep silent. Taslima raises the basic question :

Secularism was supposed to be one of the strong beliefs of Bengali Muslims, especially during the war for independence, when everyone had to co-operate with one another to win victory. What had happened to all these people after independence was won? Did they not notice the seeds of communalism being sown in the national frame work? Were they not agitated? ... But why were all those warm blooded people as cold as reptiles today? Why did they not sense how urgent it was to uproot the sapling of communalism immediately? How could they nurse the impossible notion that democracy could come to stay in a country in the absence of secularism (p. 55).

The query remains unanswered, which suggests not only the plight of the Hindu minority but also the insensitive and callous ways of the Bangladeshi Muslims; none of whom was shown as liberal, progressive and non-communal (Hashmi 180).

In contrast, the Duttas were a peculiar lot. During the partition, when there was a large scale exodus, Sudhamoy's father, Sukumar Dutta, stood determined not to betray the values he had always upheld. His version was more pragmatic than patriotic: "If there is no security in your own country, where in this world can we go looking for it?" (p.6).

For all of them (Sukumar, Sudhamoy and even Suranjan) Bangladesh is their homeland. It is more of a national identity they are concerned with. Here Taslima's comments are worth mentioning: "An independence that was carried out at the cost of three million Bengali lives proved that religion could not be the basis of a national identity" (p.8).

Sudhamoy time and again evades the idea of escaping to India. Kironmoyee's appeal, the persuasion of close relatives like Nonigopal, Haripada and Nemai go unattended. Even at the thick of suffering in the hands of fellow countrymen, he does not harbour such an idea. He stands perplexed, as in his action and articulation he is never an orthodox Hindu.either. He does not observe any ritual, Kironmoyee never pours vermilion on the partings of her hair, nor does she wear conch shells and bangles. In their action and vision, the Duttas prove to be atheists, though they remain humanistic. Yet, with the majority dictating terms to the minority, there appears to be no way in which the Duttas can break through "the one insurmountable barrier that stands between them and a peaceful life"(p.16).

VI

In the new setting Suranjan develops friendship with Haider, Kamal and Rabiul; he also stands involved with Parveen. He questions communal barriers and says that Bengalis as a race must live together in perfect harmony. For him, 'the term Bengali should always be considered indivisible in character'. Therefore the idea of labelling a particular group as outcasts in their own country is not acceptable to him. He proves thoroughly idealistic, rightly moulded in his father's ways. As a result, his fancy for Parveen or even Maya's involvement with Jehangir does not perturb him. Ironically, Parveen's relations want Suranjan to be converted before the marriage and when such a proposal does not come through, she is forced to marry elsewhere. Suranjan begins to realize that his idealistic views may not find many takers in Bangladesh.

For Suranjan it is an instance of the demystification of the preceding ideal (illusion?). A glimpse into his psyche gives us the impression of his divided self. He is shaped in the idealism of his father Sudhamoy, but the world he encounters is one bereft of any pattern whatsoever. The lip

sympathy of friends, the stoicism of Kironmoyee (his mother) and also the obstinacy of Sudhamoy in not leaving for India amidst all odds disturb him. The self of the lover in him has acted as a safety valve and his earlier association with Parveen and the recent longing for Ratna conveniently deflect the tone of his anger and disgust. But in both the cases he stands a loser and therefore his disenchantment deepens. More so, he finds his home in shambles, Maya being forcefully kidnapped (may be raped) and the 'not-me' turning against him in a seeming act of vengeance. Eventually, he is driven into a fury of mind-annihilating hatred and he rushes headlong to destroy everything. In order to propitiate his deep-seated anguish, he drinks with his friends without any hesitation (much against the norms of his grooming), brings to his room Pinky alias Shamima, rapes her and opens rivulets of blood in her body. He rebels against the sordidness of a stunningly unequal system and whines for a meaningful change in the politico-religious social system.

Taslina more often than not comments on the macro-dimensions of Suranjan's personalized war against the hypocrisy of the system he is in. His fight (most of the time intended, not, of course, materialized) for personal justice is rather an implicit crusade against social injustice. He functions in a socio-political void. The tender, gentle and loving Suranjan stands shocked behind his own rugged and sullen exterior, which swears by honour, duty and other positive values. He feels guilty after the rape and the remorse eats into his entrails. Seen in this context, Suranjan's dilemma is a precondition, rather than a fall out. His insecurity is pitted against the security of Kamal. Claiming himself to be the 'son of the soil', he asks: "Why did he have to seek refuge in Kamal's home? Why did he have to run away from his home?" (p.1). But he fails to understand a fundamental equation : it is not any individual's ire against another, it is a typical case of genocide, a frenetic mob reacting against 'the other', who are not in any way concerned. In fact, our world has become too small a place and a happening anywhere has its fall out everywhere. It is essentially an attempt created to play on the reader's innermost fears and insecurities.

VII

A pervading tone of resignation with occasional flashes of revolt captures our attention. The personal and political histories are artistically blended to explore the tenets of socio-political cataclysms of our time. The canvas is too large, the stage crowded; the attempt to comprehend too much has led to a cramming of incidental details. Multiplicity blurs the main outlines; the human story is subordinated to the historical record which is displayed through Taslima's sweeping comprehension, architectonic power and sheer creative energy. She, of course, frequently resorts to description of incidents but whenever she loosens the stronghold of extraneous comment on her narrative, she gives herself breathing space to emerge with some bright and insightful comments on the eccentric traditions that constitute fundamental components of the social structure in the subcontinent. Now the question is: should a writer enable his/her readers to escape from social and ethical responsibilities through 'catharsis' always? The arousal of concern is perhaps the prime objective (*Lajja* is dedicated 'to the people of the Indian subcontinent'). Here the work does not provide the readers with the escape route of catharsis, but forces them to a regime of reason. Taslima ends her meditation by asking rhetorically what indeed has been the point of the crumbling social order that we all live in. She optimistically affirms : 'Let Another Name for Religion be Humanism'.

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Review Essay

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY EVER TO INSPIRE: APJ ABDUL KALAM'S *WINGS OF FIRE*

Pashupati Jha

"We are all born with a divine fire in us. Our efforts should be to give wings to this fire and fill the world with the glow of its goodness"—so concludes the "Introduction" to this autobiography of the present President of the country. This book was first published in 1999, three years before his elevation to the highest office of the nation. It is a record of intense struggles—saga of a small-town boy from Rameswaram, born in a lower middle-class family of semi-educated but wise and pious people, striving amid financial strain to become an engineering graduate from the Madras Institute of Technology and then beginning his professional career in 1958 as a Senior Scientific Assistant with a princely basic salary of Rs.250 a month; and rising steadily, by single-minded dedication, to the topmost rocket and missile scientist of the country responsible for the successful launch of SLV-3, Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Trishul, and Nag.

Thus, this book is also the saga of India's struggle for indigenous defence technology, its rightful aspiration for autonomy in the advanced area of spacecraft and missile capability. Interwoven with this individual and national efforts, is also the subtle shade of secular India where the mind of growing Kalam was nourished by the regular nawaz of his father, the piety of Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry, his father's friend and the chief priest of the Rameswaram Temple, and later by the compassion and understanding of the Christian community donating its beautiful St. Mary Magdalene Church at Thumba to house the first unit of the Space Research Centre.

And yet it is not all; *Wings of Fire* also gives graphic details of the towering personalities of the time who always goaded Kalam to go further in his relentless pursuit, amid a series of temporary setbacks. Some of them were: Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, who revived the sagging spirit of the young Kalam when he was not selected for the Air Force at Dehra

Dun; Prof Sarabhai, his first great mentor who encouraged him through the thick and thin of the first phase of space research and who used early “errors as opportunities to promote innovation”(62); Prof Dhawan, who was “a man with a mission”(78); Dr Arunachalam, “an electrically charged dynamo”(110); and T.N. Seshan, the formidable IAS officer, who “used to kindle the minds of scientists with his tremendous analytical capability”(79). In addition to all the above stalwarts, Abdul Kalam, an excellent team manager, had a following of a dedicated group of scientists and technocrats, who used to forget their personal comforts and pleasures for their passion to achieve something spectacular for the motherland. Mr. Kalam is the last person to garner all the glory for himself; he has saluted all his subordinates in very high terms: “The profiles of these courageous people will never be written about in any history book, but it is such silent people on whose hard work generations thrive and nations progress” (150).

Yet no progress is achieved without confronting problems; Abdul Kalam was not one to succumb to such obstacles, personal or professional. He had become an engineer by overcoming the financial constraint of his family—his sister Zohara had to sell out her ornaments and he himself had to strive for scholarships. But problems at the professional level, involving a lot many people, were much more complex. When he had to design the first hovercraft, his team was called “a group of eccentric inventors in pursuit of an impossible dream,” and as a team leader he was branded as “yet another country bumpkin”(28). When Nandi, the hovercraft, was ready and Krishna Menon wanted to board it with Kalam in the pilot's seat, a Group Captain of the Air Force looked down upon Kalam signalling him to come down, but the Defence Minister allowed Kalam to be in the driver's seat. When for SLV-3 and related projects, the need was for 275 engineers and scientists, he was given a mere 50, while those projects meant 255 sub-assemblies and 44 major sub-systems. There was then the usual bureaucratic delays in the procurement of materials, and once he had to burst out in anger in the meeting of the Space Science Council because he “was determined to fight the inertia built into the system” before he found himself “being dragged down with it” (76). Later on, his team decided a different strategy to tackle this problem: “If you need to write a letter

to a work centre, send a fax; if you need to send a telex or fax, telephone; and if the need arises for telephonic discussions, visit the place personally”(130-31). On his individual level too, he developed a passion for personal responsibility and transferred the same spirit on to his team. He had to leave all his individual urges behind, making his technological pursuit his only mission with religious rigour, “no badminton in the evenings, no more weekends or holidays, no family, no relations, not even any friends outside the SLV circle” (89). Furthermore he also used to fall back upon prayer for additional help: “God, our Creator, has stored within our minds and personalities, great potential strength and ability. Prayer helps us to tap and develop these powers” (33). And again, “I made a true estimate of my own ability, then raised it to 50 per cent and put myself in God’s hands” (49).

But a technological feat of such magnitude was bound to suffer from teething problems. When in launching SLV-3, a few initial attempts failed, he was subjected to scathing criticism by the press and the public—some cartoons of that period find place in this autobiography. But in those moments of dejection and despair his team stood behind him like a rock and his second mentor, Dr. Braham Prakash, came to revive his spirit when the second stage of SLV suddenly went out of control and the payload of the fourth stage splashed into the sea. Dr. Prakash had a unique damage control principle derived from the front warfare: “Just get the fellow home alive. He’ll recover”(95). And actually Mr. Kalam recovered sooner than expected, and on 18th July 1980, the whole excited nation found itself in the group of an exclusive small international club capable of launching its own satellite. There was no holding back thereafter, one success led to another in succession like the launching of surface-to-surface weapon system Prithvi, the tactical core vehicle Trishul, the surface-to-air area defence system Akash, the anti-tank missile project Nag, and re-entry experiment launch vehicle Agni. And behind all such achievements, was his earnest desire to be more than what he was “at that moment” (140).

Kalam’s story of success can be summed up in his eternal faith in God, almost equal faith in himself, and his iron-like determination all the time to forge ahead with all his physical, mental and spiritual energy. That is why he is very much

candid to point out: "I have never lived off the profits of others' minds. My life, in keeping with my nature, has never been that of a ruthless achiever" (102). If ever he has been one, he has been ruthless to himself, ignoring all personal demands of relationships for the sake of the nation. A strong sense of nationalism is part of the pages of this autobiography, which has been penned, on his behalf, by his fellow scientist, Mr. Arun Tiwari. Mr Kalam has, therefore, this final message for all: "Let the latent fire in the heart of every Indian acquire wings, and the glory of this great country light up the sky"(168). If style is the man, the lucid language of the book is a testimony to a living legend of simple living and high thinking by a man who has spent his life-time in a single room furnished with books and a few hired furniture. The simple style is made more interesting and inspiring by quotes from scriptures, Emerson, Lewis Carroll, S.T.Coleridge, G.B. Shaw, T.S.Eliot, W.H.Auden and others, pointing to the wide reading of this man of science. At times, the factual details from technology are relieved by humorous references to "the ubiquitous presence of potatoes on the dining table, right from breakfast to dinner"(26) at Kanpur, and "paan-chewing imitations of Wajid Ali Shah," and "dog-walking sahibs"(27).

"This story will end with me, for I have no belongings in the worldly sense"(177)—writes the author towards the end of this autobiography. But let me assure you Mr Kalam, President or no President, your example as a man—you were neither born great, nor greatness was thrust upon you, but you achieved every bit of it yourself—will always remain a source of inspiration, and every Indian would like to proclaim proudly with Shakespeare:

*His life was gentle; and the elements
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world: 'This was a man!'*

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RE-MARKINGS

A literary work of art, in my view, is a gift to the reader - the finest gift an author can compose. I believe it should be generous, creating an entire multi-dimensional fictional "world" for the reader to experience, one so rich that the world can be revisited over and over, and with each re-reading across decades the reader discovers something new, i.e., grows with the text. In addition to the above, a fine work of art (for me) is a celebration of so many things - the endless possibilities of language, of thought, of spirited storytelling, of human behavior and its possibilities, and the galaxy of fictional forms we inherit from our predecessors from all over the world.

**CHARLES RICHARD
JOHNSON**

(In a letter to Nibir K. Ghosh)

Charles Richard Johnson is the
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