

[www.remarkings.com](http://www.remarkings.com)

# **RE-MARKINGS**

**Vol. 4 No. 2 September 2005**

**Anne Tyler**

**Barbara Kingsolver**

**Punyakante Wijenaik**

**Anita Desai**

**Githa Hariharan**

**Michael Ondaatje**

**Margaret Laurence**

**Graham Greene**

**Translation:  
Theory & Practice**

**Badal Sircar**

**Rama Mehta**

**Amitav Ghosh**

**Tripuraneni Gopichand**

**Review Essays**

**Poetry**

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

# **RE-MARKINGS**

**Vol. 4 No. 2 September 2005**

**ISSN 0972-611X**

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

*Chief Editor*  
*Nibir K. Ghosh*

*Editor*  
*A. Karunaker*

ISSN 0972-611X

Articles and research papers for publication in *Re-Markings* must conform to the *M.L.A. style sheet* and should not exceed 3000 words. Manuscripts should preferably be sent on floppy disk in text format along with a hard copy to the Chief Editor/Editor or through e-mail attachment to [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com).

*Chief Editor*

Nibir K. Ghosh,  
68 New Idgah Colony,  
Agra-282001, U.P. (INDIA).  
Telephone : +91 562 2420330, 2420116.  
e-mail : [ghoshnk@hotmail.com](mailto:ghoshnk@hotmail.com)

*Editor*

A. Karunaker,  
House No. 12-13-257,  
Street No. 3, Brindavan Residency  
Taranaka  
Secunderabad-500017.  
Tel: +91 40 27001349  
e-mail : [karunakeredrem@hotmail.com](mailto:karunakeredrem@hotmail.com)

Published by :

Sumita Ghosh  
e-mail : [sumitaghoshrem@hotmail.com](mailto:sumitaghoshrem@hotmail.com)

Cover design : Sundeep Arora

e-mail : [sundeep\\_arora@hotmail.com](mailto:sundeep_arora@hotmail.com)

Printed at : Aydee Offset, Agra

Copyright © : Nibir K. Ghosh

*Subscription Rates:*

Single Copy : Rs.100 US \$15 UK £10  
Annual (2 Issues) : Rs.200 US \$30 UK £20  
Three Years (6 Issues) : Rs.500 US \$75 UK £50  
(postage extra for registered Book-Post.)

Subscription may be sent by Money Order/ Demand Draft to

RE-MARKINGS  
68 New Idgah Colony,  
Agra-282001, U.P. (INDIA).

## EDITORIAL

“If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on the human face,” Wrote George Orwell, in his work *Nineteen Eightyfour* (1949). Nearly six decades have passed since Orwell made this prophetic statement. In this short span of time man seems to have progressed at a pace which would perhaps confound and shock even Alvin Toffler’s apprehension and understanding of the future. Experiments with Communism, Fascism and the like took on many shapes and forms as man sought to consolidate his power and hold over the oppressed community of the ‘wretched of the earth’ who went on ‘living and partly living’ with routine fears and anxieties. The inexorable march of time brought in its wake a more formidable adversary of peace and prosperity in the grim shape of terrorism. Like everything else, terrorism too has turned global. No one is really safe anymore. One may be engrossed in offering prayers to Lord Shivea in Amarnath, or commuting by train in Bihar or London, or sipping coffee with friends at the top of Empire State Building, or deliberating on some important Bill in the Parliament, or simply admiring the majesty and grandeur of the Statue of Liberty; in an instant one can become a part of Ground Zero. The recent assassination of Mr. Lakshman Kadirgama, Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, and an ardent champion of peace, only confirms what Punyakante Wijenaiké’s states in *An Enemy Within*: “that existence is like a fragile bubble which could burst any moment.”

What is ironical and sad about the catastrophic advent of terrorism is the increase in the tribe of those who are easily seduced by idealized notions of fundamentalism that justify inhuman acts of unqualified violence and bestiality. In a recent interview given to CNN, Mohamed el-Amir – the father of Mohamed Atta, one of the hijackers who commandeered the first plane that crashed into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 – praised the recent terror attacks in London and said many more would follow. Mohamed el-Amir said the attacks in the United States and the July 7 attacks in London were the beginning of what would be a 50-year religious war, in which there would be many more fighters like his son. He declared that terror attacks around the world were a “nuclear bomb that has now been activated and is ticking.”

After such knowledge, what forgiveness! Although terrorism refutes reason and logic in all forms, I wonder if those anonymous faces and voices operating from the darker regions of man's inhumanity could heed what Stephen Gill says in his poem "Terrorists": Why they talk of harmony/ but plan genocide/ Why they cannot see/ the ecstatic dance of peacocks/ and across a borderless horizon/ the dove flying."

It gives me immense pleasure to offer Prof. M. Asaduddin, a distinguished member of the Re-Markings fraternity, heartfelt felicitations, for being the proud recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award for English translation. His brilliant and insightful essay "Translation and Indian Literature" in this issue of Re-Markings reflects his experience and expertise in translation theory and practice.

Translating creativity can be an enormously difficult task. In "A Defence of Poetry" P.B. Shelley pointed out the attendant vanity of translation: it were as wise to cast a violet into the crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transmute from one language to another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring from its seed, or it will bear no flower." In a slightly different context I recall an amusing exchange that occurs in John Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife* (1697):

*Belinda: Ay, but you know we must return good for evil.*

*Lady Brute: That may be a mistake in the translation.*

John Millington Synge may be right in stating, "A translation is no translation unless it will give you the music of a poem along with the words of it," but in talking of perfect translation, I would prefer to take the cue from Aristotle's mimetic view of art and say that a good translator ought to aim not at a photographic imitation of the original but an imaginative reconstruction of the same in a way that ensures spontaneity as well as readability. If one is captivated by the music and flavour of the translated text, it matters little if something inconsequential is lost in translation.

**Nibir K. Ghosh**  
Chief Editor

## CONTENTS

Translation and Indian Literature

*M. Asaduddin / 7*

Place as Definition of Self: An Exploration of Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven*

*Katy Howe / 16*

'Invisible Motion': Reevaluating Time in Anne Tyler's *Saint Maybe* and Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*

*Jonathan Little / 23*

Rewriting History in Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Seige*

*Alpana Neogy / 37*

Pietàs of Suffering: A Reading of Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*

*Anita Chaudhuri / 47*

Through the Four Varnas and Ashrams: Evolution of Two Women Protagonists of Margaret Laurence

*Neera Singh / 55*

*The Bungler: A Journey Through Life*

A Psycho-analytical Novel

*B. Yadava Raju / 64*

The Plays of Graham Greene: A Study in Technique

*Anju Bala Agrawal / 70*

Translation: Negotiating Cultures

*Debarati Bandyopadhyay / 75*

Badal Sircar and the 'Third Theatre'

*Indulekha Roy Burman / 81*

The Changing World of Women in

Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*

*Sudhi Rajiv / 86*

The Dialectics of Subsistence and Civilization:

A Study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

*Akhileshwar Thakur / 91*

## **REVIEW ESSAY**

A Grim Record of Man's Inhumanity to Man  
*Tissa Ajit Jayatilaka / 96*

Undoing Dualities: Desire, Spirituality, and  
Feminism in Indian Literature  
*Lopamudra Basu / 101*

Guileless Word  
*V.V.B. Rama Rao / 107*

Mapping the Contours of Punjabi Poetry  
*Rajesh Kumar Sharma / 111*

## **POETRY**

Three Poems  
*Raghukul Bhushan*  
Exile / 114  
This is the World of Man / 115  
Hymn to America / 115

Three Poems  
*Annie Pothen*  
Tsunami / 116  
Life Skills / 117  
This is a Jungle World, My Friend / 117

Three Poems  
*Jagannath Prasad Das*  
Mahabharat / 118  
Talisman / 119  
The Daffodil / 121

Three Poems  
*Stephen Gill*  
The Terrorists / 122  
A Question / 123  
If There be a Third World War / 124

Invincible / 125  
*Shreya Maheshwari*

## TRANSLATION AND INDIAN LITERATURE

*M. Asaduddin*

The history of translation is the history of human civilization and understanding, and misunderstanding as well. Moments of significant changes in the history and civilization of any people can be seen to be characterised by increased activity in the field of translation. The European renaissance was made possible through the massive translation by Arab Muslims from the work of the Hellenic tradition. And it is only now that the contribution of the Moorish Spain to European civilisation is being explored and excavated.

In the case of India, though there is no consensus about the originary moment of Indian renaissance – that whether there was an Indian renaissance at all in the European sense, and if there was one then whether it happened simultaneously in different languages and literatures of India or at different times, but there is no disagreement about the fact that there was a kind of general awakening throughout India in the nineteenth century and that was made possible through the extensive translation of European and mainly English works in different languages, not only of literature but also of social sciences, philosophy, ethics and morality etc. In some literatures of the North East, may be at other places too, the originary moment of literature is the moment of translation too. For example, in case of Mizo literature it did not have a script before the European missionaries devised a script to translate evangelical literature into Mizo. Raymond Schwab in his book, *The Oriental Renaissance*<sup>1</sup> has shown how a new kind of awareness took place and curiosity about the Orient aroused in the West through the translation of Persian texts from Sadi, Rumi, Omar Khayyam etc. on the one hand, and Vedic and Sanskritic texts from India on the other. Translation has been a deeply humanising activity and that is why it was dangerous too. William Tyndale was burnt at the stakes in 1536 for translating *New Testament* from Greek and part of the old testament from Hebrew.

**Prof. M. Asaduddin** currently teaches English literature and Translation Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

**Note:** For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)



**PLACE AS DEFINITION OF SELF:  
AN EXPLORATION OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S  
*THE BEAN TREES AND PIGS IN HEAVEN***

*Katy Howe*

*"If you don't know where you are, you don't know  
who you are."*

-- Wendell Berry, quoted by Wallace Stegner (199)

Wallace Stegner, in his essay "The Sense of Place," argues that a character with a sense of place, of rootedness, and, therefore, a true sense of self-awareness is hard to find in American literature. Many American literary heroes (Huckleberry Finn springs to mind) have no deep-seated connection to a certain place. They are always in motion and, as a result, are always searching for a concrete definition of self. As found especially in the American tradition of frontier exploration and movement, the kind of character that Stegner explicates is difficult to pin down. The American character is one that, for the most part, is not static in regards to place. The main characters in Barbara Kingsolver's two novels *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs In Heaven* are no exception. They literally travel the entire mid-west in search for a place in which they can safely root themselves. By running from what they consider to be threats against their lifestyle and happiness, Taylor, Turtle, and Alice are searching for the sense of place that Stegner implies as being so important to the development of self-awareness. The hybridization of the places they experience, especially the Cherokee Nation and Pittman County, Kentucky, gives these characters the ability to form a true self-awareness through their complex sense of place.

A sense of place, some critics argue, is extremely important to a person's self-awareness. Michael Kowalewski asserts, in his essay "Writing in Place: The New American Regionalism," that a sense of place is invaluable to a person's sense of self.

- **Ms. Katy A. Howe**, an immigrant from England, is a graduate student at Rhode Island College (Providence, U.S.A.).

**Note: For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)**

**‘INVISIBLE MOTION’: REEVALUATING TIME IN  
ANNE TYLER’S SAINT MAYBE AND  
ANITA DESAI’S CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY**

*Jonathan Little*

*Clocks slay time... Time is dead as long as it is  
being clicked off by little wheels; only when the  
clock stops does time come to life. -- William  
Faulkner*

In Tyler’s *Saint Maybe* a recently married man, Danny Bedloe, hears from his brother, Ian, that his wife is having an affair. Slightly drunk after attending a bachelor party, Danny drives into a wall, killing himself and leaving his three small children without a father. Ian feels terribly guilty and gives up college to take care of Agatha, Thomas, and Daphne after their mother dies of an overdose of sleeping pills. Ian is a reluctant Saint, a Saint Maybe, struggling mightily for atonement for over two decades. In Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* a woman, Bim Das, dreams of conquering the world through her brilliant mind and social conscience. Yet when her parents die she gives up her plans for bigger things and stays home to take care of her autistic brother Baba in their stifling and dusty family home. Twenty years later her sister Tara returns to the family home in India for a visit and old wounds and discontents are brought up until there is a kind of reconciliation, a clear light of day that shines through the suffering and pain to give Bim hope.

At first glance these two novels would seem to have little in common. One is set in Baltimore, the other in Old Delhi. One is seemingly unconcerned with history and the other is deeply concerned with healing national divisions. Yet despite differences in geographic and nationalistic contexts both novels address similar themes of individual fulfillment, family duty, and personal sacrifice.

- **Dr. Jonathan Little** is Professor of English at Alverno College in Milwaukee, U.S.A.

**Note: For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)**

## REWRITING HISTORY IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S *IN TIMES OF SEIGE*

*Alpana Neogy*

History is a specific discipline that attempts to understand past human societies in relation to the present. It always undergoes a process of rewriting as the approaches of enquiry and the methods of such enquiry are multiple. Rewriting of history becomes necessary as new data or unknown documents become available. New "tools" of enquiry also prompt fresh enquiry into cherished "facts" about the past. Thus the bygone age, although it may have ceased to exist, is in a sense never dead. The relevant evidence of the past is incomplete and fragmented. The task of the modern day historian is to make the past intelligible by judiciously sifting through this evidence. The outcome of this enquiry is often fluid and groping in nature and not a finite and final solution. Revision and rewriting is an innate ingredient of historical writing and not a drawback or failure of this discipline.

In recent times, the flawed logic of chauvinism, 'majoritarianism' and the claim of cultural exclusivity in the study of early India has been gaining prominence. Romila Thapar (in *Early India from Genesis to c. AD 1300*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 2002) laments the growing tendency of branding everything concerning early India as "Hindu". This denies the then existence of multiple identities of varna-jatis, occupations, regions and sects.

Githa Hariharan's novel *In Times of Siege* (2003)<sup>1</sup> explores "the link between fascism and the ugly faces of Hindutva unveiling around us in the regimentation of thought"(101). Shivamurthy, a Professor of History at the Kasturba Gandhi Open University, in New Delhi, is a "processor of historical resources for ...unseen students"(14). He is chosen to head the B.A. (History) Correspondence course as he would balance any Marxist bias with his liberalism.

- **Ms. Alpana Neogy** is Reader in English at Ram Lal Anand College, University of Delhi. Her special interest lies in Partition Literature.

**Note:** For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)

**PIETÀS OF SUFFERING:  
A READING OF ONDAATJE'S  
*ANIL'S GHOST***

*Anita Chaudhuri*

Michael Ondaatje has been described as a writer who is fascinated with borders, including those between literature and reality. He trespasses the generic margins with ease, crossing over literary ones into the discourses of history and biography, even autobiography. Being a peripatetic storyteller, Ondaatje works through myths, legends and anecdotes. He borrows from poetry, fiction, documents, reportage, photographs, interviews. By deploying a variety of genres he establishes a polyphonic voice for the narrative.

The intricate mingling of facts, fiction and personal reference allows Ondaatje's literary output to evade categorization into already known genres. This challenges the reader to make new sense of the work. His ingenuity does not lead to a rejection of traditional representation and notions of human intentionality. Instead he seeks to portray a reality outside literature.

Ondaatje's literary perceptions do not call for a total canning of an incident or an event. The episode has to affect him emotionally or in a sensual way before something hits him. He also intends to learn from the prevalent circumstance, coupled with a sense of quest. History provides him the experience, which further guides his imagistic writing. Ondaatje makes his own problems as an artist confronting intriguing, but intractable material – a "desert of facts" which he must organize, interpret and bring to life. In *Anil's Ghost*, Ondaatje entwines the real and the imagined truth to create a work that looks at human suffering in the face..

- **Ms. Anita Chaudhuri** is working as Assistant Editor in Orient Longman, New Delhi. She has been awarded the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Fulbright Fellowship 2005 at Portland, Oregon, USA.

**Note: For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)**

**THROUGH THE FOUR VARNAS AND  
ASHRAMS: EVOLUTION OF TWO WOMEN  
PROTAGONISTS OF  
MARGARET LAURENCE**

*Neera Singh*

The attainment of true happiness is the aim of all human beings and this lies in the finding and maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind and body. A culture is to be valued to the extent to which it has discovered the right key to this harmony. A civilization must be judged by the manner in which all its principles, ideas, forms and ways of living, work to bring that harmony out, manage its rhythmic play and secure its continuance or the development of its motives.

While reason and science and all other auxiliaries have their place in the human effort, the real truth goes beyond them. The secret of our ultimate perfection is to be discovered deeper within us; it is to be sought centrally in spiritual self-knowledge and perfection. India has already laid down all the large lines and main truths of such a psychology, but now even the Western way of thinking has acknowledged the truth of holding these ideas.

The ancient civilization of India founded itself very expressly upon four human interests: *Kama*, *Artha*, *Dharma* and *Moksha* – or (1) desire and enjoyment (2) material, economic and other aims and needs of the mind and body, (3) ethical conduct and the right law of individual and social life, also implying a unity with the moral and universal order and (4) spiritual liberation. Corresponding to these four stages of human interests, Indian culture seized upon a double idea for its own guidance, which it threw into a basic system of the individual life in the social frame. This was the double system of the four *Varnas* and the four *Ashrams* – ...

- **Dr. Neera Singh** is a Senior Lecturer in English in the Indira Gandhi National Open University (New Delhi).

**Note:** For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)

***THE BUNGLER: A JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE***  
**A PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL NOVEL**

***B. Yadava Raju***

Indian English literature is of many hues and translations from the Indian languages broaden its horizon. A classic Telugu novel by Tripuraneni Gopichand was translated into English in 2003. The English title for the Telugu novel is *The Bungler : A Journey Through Life*, translated by D.S. Rao. The original Telugu title is *Asamardhuni Jivayatra*, which literally means 'An Incompetent Man's Life-journey'. The translator has given, in the "Introduction" to the novel, his reasons for selecting the word 'Bungler' for the Telugu word 'asmardhudu', which means 'an incompetent' person, an 'inefficient' one, a 'misfit', a 'mismanager', a 'bungler', or a good-for nothing. Obviously, the Telugu word is more resonant and flowing than the English word 'Bungler' for a bi-lingual Telugu reader. But it cannot be helped. The English sub-title 'A Journey Through Life' is an equivalent to the Telugu word 'Jivayatra' (life-journey) that tries to retain some of the resonance of the original Telugu word. By subverting Marxism and debunking the post-war discourses of existentialism and absurdism, the novel offers a presentation of character in psychoanalytical terms. This sort of subversion was relatively unknown in Indian English literature until recent times. Both in terms of theme and technique the novel is far ahead of its English counterpart.

*The Bungler* is about the tragic story of a so-called rationalist. At the time of writing this novel, Gopichand was undergoing a psychological dilemma between the rationalistic approach which he had inherited from his father, Ramaswamy Choudhary and the ideas he had developed on his own, which were quite contrary to the rationalism of his father. The novelist was at cross roads with regard to these conflicting ideas.

- **Dr. B. Yadav Raju** is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

**Note: For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)**

## THE PLAYS OF GRAHAM GREENE: A STUDY IN TECHNIQUE

*Anju Bala Agrawal*

Originally a novelist and screen-play writer, Graham Greene had a high fascination for drama. In the 1950s, dramatists were not making any radical experimentation with structure. Britain's leading playwrights -- Priestley, Rattigan, Coward, Hunter, Ustinov et al. were writing in the rigid tradition of the well made play, modifying the rules only slightly. With such background, the arrival of Graham Greene was an event of significance. Greene preached the need for an underlying philosophical or religious adherence in a writer. In his review of Modern British novelists he wrote that the "religious sense was lost" after the death of James. He said that many dramatists were expending their talents on innocuous themes. Their dramas were called drama of insignificance but Greene's conception was different. In his first play, *The Living Room*, he combined a traditional well made plot with dominantly moral and spiritual concern. He tried to satisfy the Chekhovian requirements he believed in. While writing his novels, he was actively working in the cinema as an assistant director. His entry into the domain of the theatre was perhaps an inevitable step forward in his career.

Greene's second play is also a religious play. In *The Potting Shed*, there is a bargain with God and its perplexing consequences. This bargain caused critical confusion so Greene felt compelled to explain himself in view of it. Greene defended Callifer's offer to relinquish his faith as "a contract made in the dark". A familiar aspect of Greene's drama is "the contract made in the dark". This formula is shown in *The Living Room* also where the results of bargaining with God are not always demonstratable. In *The Potting Shed*.

- **Dr. Anju Bala Agrawal** is Reader, Department of English, R.C.A. Girls' College, Mathura.

**Note:** For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)

## TRANSLATION: NEGOTIATING CULTURES

*Debarati Bandyopadhyay*

General readers, meaning those without any special or technical knowledge of a field of research and problematics, mostly consider Translation as an interlingual process. Such translation suggests a process of negotiation or interaction between cultures. For a long time, anteriority was taken as the mark of superiority and the translated version remained just that, an attempt, a version of the original. But the moment the term 'original' is mentioned, we are reminded of its Latin origin *origo* meaning rise, beginning and source. It is in this sense that Samuel Johnson defines 'original' in his *Dictionary* (1755-56) as "First copy; archetype; that from which anything is transcribed or translated, pristine' suggesting purity."<sup>1</sup> The original is in this sense the only text to be endowed with legitimacy. And since, according to Dr. Johnson, it is the one from which anything is translated, the second in line, the translated version, therefore, can never be pristine, or legitimate.

Tejaswini Niranjana reminds us in her book *Siting Translation* (1992): "*Translatio* (Latin) and *Metapherein* (Greek) at once suggest movement, disruption, displacement. So does *Ubersetzung* (German). The French *traducteur* exists between *interprete* and *truchement*, an indication that we might fashion a translative practice between interpretation and reading, carrying a disruptive force much greater than the other two" (8). The movement, disruption and displacement she mentions are of seminal importance in every act of translation. These are the functions of translations that subvert, destabilize and question notions of source vs. target language, text and culture, as if the former, being the original, is always better. Nowadays, while discussing language, text and culture as the basis of any act of translation, we tend, rather, to mention the positions of host and guest.

- **Dr. Debarati Bandyopadhyay** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan.

**Note:** For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)



## THE CHANGING WORLD OF WOMEN IN RAMA MEHTA'S INSIDE THE HAVELI

*Sudhi Rajiv*

In the post-independence period women are gradually occupying the center-stage along with the other oppressed groups. It is natural, therefore, that women writers and even male writers should treat them in diverse aspects. Their novels reflect the varied features of contemporary Indian society on the threshold of awakening and change.

Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* (1977) which won the Sahitya Akademy Award in 1979 depicts the lives of women inside a haveli in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Mehta skillfully describes the hopes and despair, superstitions and beliefs, joys and sorrows of the women inside the haveli. My paper examines how traditional values and practices are negotiated in the present times by different classes of women inside the haveli.

Geeta, an educated girl from Bombay where there was "free mingling of men and women", is married into an aristocratic family where women "remained in purdah". This juxtaposition of different worlds: the urban modern world vis-à-vis the traditional conservative world, the world of the poor vis-à-vis the world of the rich and the joint family vis-à-vis the individual provide for a variety and complexity of human relationship within the family. Her marriage to Ajay Singh is a marriage into a family dominated by patriarchal feudalism. Geeta has to live in "a constricted atmosphere of world of women" where men are regarded as Gods. But the male dominated world is confined only to the men's section. Rama Mehta wants us to see the haveli which has "no shape from the outside, but inside there is a definite plan" (6).

- **Dr. (Ms.) Sudhi Rajiv** is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Jai Narayan Vyas University, Jodhpur.

**Note:** For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)

**THE DIALECTICS OF SUBSISTENCE AND  
CIVILIZATION : A STUDY OF AMITAV GHOSH'S  
*THE HUNGRY TIDE***

*Akhileshwar Thakur*

Amitav Ghosh's most recent novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004)<sup>1</sup> succeeds in communicating 'a sense of place' with the intimacy and grace which his earlier novels had somehow failed to effect. Though Ghosh has successfully portrayed strange exotic and far-flung places – spread in many continents – in his several earlier novels, nowhere was he so bare, biting and touching as he is in the 'tide country' in his recent novel. Here he communicates an extraordinary 'sense of place' with an eloquence which is so near to the human heart. Yet, according to his own belief, it is ultimately the loss of it – the travails of dislocation -- which makes the novel memorable.

*The Hungry Tide* (2004) is, indeed, marked by many features which set it apart from his earlier novels. Here Ghosh is free from his preoccupations with history, politics, anthropology, travel, 'boundaries', riots, partition etc. which formed the subject matter of many of his earlier novels. Here he keeps himself confined to the role of a story teller with enchantment and thrill which is at once touching and revealing. The novel is a testament of Ghosh's attempt to discover and animate a new territory by summoning up the aura and ambience of a singular, fascinating place, another world, from its history and myth. The locale is the Sunderbans, between the sea and the plains of Bengal on the easternmost coast of India. The incidents occur on some of the islands of the region which the novelist calls 'tide country'- 'bhatir desh' - inhabited by people who eke out a precarious existence from mud and water.

- **Dr. Akhileshwar Thakur** teaches in the Department of English, T.N.B. College, Bhagalpur (Bihar).

**Note:** For complete article contact [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com)

## POETRY

### THREE POEMS

*Raghukul Bhushan*

#### EXILE

Guards of the graveyards  
And gravediggers were they all;  
They grinned and snarled  
To bully and banish me.  
They failed and still succeeded.  
I was an outsider for them.  
It was their kingdom.  
So they yearned for my exile.  
When they found me  
Determined to defeat them  
Or obdurate to cheat them,  
They launched a tirade;  
Also they devoted themselves  
To raise the fury  
Of dust and dust storm.  
I stayed and loitered there.  
Guards began to grin when I grinned.  
They chose to be friends and friendly.  
Then they worked better.

No holistic mind they cared,  
All logistic bind they dared.  
These shadows and spirits  
Of the rusted intellect,  
Fled from the grounds  
Of moral and spiritual concerns.  
They roamed freely  
For nuisance and rowdyism  
And practised all vile and guile  
To defile and exile  
Sense, sanity and solemn right.  
Deifying serfdom was sacrosanct.  
Vain was my venture with the guards.  
I left them victorious and dancing.  
I accepted the exile.  
It was too, too late!

### **THIS IS THE WORLD OF MAN**

This is the world of man  
In which lives the man of the world.  
Be one or you fail -  
This is the message on sale.  
This is a chamber of horrors.  
The roots of sin have gone deep  
And spread to inaccessible distances.  
Man's maddening nurture

Has yielded rich harvest.  
So he reaps it blindly.  
Hurrahs are hollow;  
Hee-haws make the welkins ring.  
He projects nature thus;  
He rejects nature thus;  
He hurts nature thus;  
He asserts nature thus.  
Will it be his swan's song?  
Well, this is the world of man  
In which lives the man of the world.

### **HYMN TO AMERICA**

*America --*  
Sandwiched between the Atlantic and the Pacific,  
And weighted up by Canada --  
Is the land of  
Washington and Hamilton,  
Lincoln and Clinton;  
Stars and Stripes,  
Freedom and fraternity --  
The land that embraces  
Humanity in totality.  
This is America  
Which writes her history  
In the scarlet letter

On the leaves of grass  
Around the Walden with Waldo  
To lend its transcendence  
For the portrait of a lady.  
And for Frost to sing,  
In pastoral tranquility  
Where he has miles to go--  
( and perhaps not to sleep)  
To the celestial heights  
To pluck the virgin stars  
And bring the swimming skies  
To adore and crown,  
Disquiet man's renown.  
Surely with Martin's dream  
On the pinnacles reaching the heavens.  
America is the land  
Where opportunities abound  
For self-fulfillment;  
Where we learn  
Spiritualism in pragmatism --  
Be it love, sex or success.  
And all with a difference  
And that has made all the difference!

- **Dr. RaghuKul Bhushan** teaches English at Lajpat Rai D.A.V. College, Jagraon (Ludhiana). He is the proud recipient of the prestigious World Champion Amateur Poet award given by The International Society of Poets, U.S.A. in the Poetry Convention held at Washington, D.C. in August 2001. His poetic venture titled *Sentinels of the Soul* is expected to hit the stands soon.



### THREE POEMS

*Annie Pothen*

#### TSUNAMI

Nature's own wrathful  
tsunami  
Leaves in its wake  
destruction - more destruction  
It's the Tsunami of social turmoil  
the Tsunami of human animosity  
racism, strife and the rest  
that leaves me truly gasping!

#### LIFE SKILLS

Some call them soft skills  
Others call them key skills  
While most say  
They are life skills  
They give you  
The cutting edge you need  
in this competitive world  
to cut your competitor out  
for your own survival  
Inevitable you say,  
With justification  
And a meaningful nod  
Of your head  
Didn't good old Darwin  
Tell us about

The fittest, the subtlest  
Not the guileless?  
Grant me Lord, the primary skill  
To accept the skill-less majority  
Of this flawed world.

### **THIS IS A JUNGLE WORLD, MY FRIEND**

This is a jungle world, my friend,  
As you will soon discover  
Where predatory impulses  
Close in for a subtle kill.

This is a jungle world, my friend  
Where filthy lucre and flexed muscles  
Can erase your very being  
From the face of the earth.

This is jungle world, my friend  
Where language employed  
In pretty puns and rhyming rhetoric  
Cuts you in to slender pieces.

This is a jungle world, my friend  
Where the underdog is trampled on  
With no remorse or hesitation  
So be awake and beware.

- **Dr. Annie Pothan** is Associate Professor of English at Nizam College, Osmania University, Hyderabad. Her poems have appeared in *PEN*, *Quest* and other reputed journals and magazines. Her collection "20 poems" was published by the Paradoxist Literary Movement Association, Arizona, USA and chosen for distinguished achievement in the Paradoxist Literary Movement, 1998.





## THREE POEMS

*Jagannath Prasad Das*

### MAHABHARATA

It is not possible  
to live for all time in exile,  
donning disguises;  
one has to return  
to one's own land.

It is not possible  
to remain neutral,  
for war here  
is inevitable;  
there is no choice  
but to take sides.

Here, in the epic of life  
all has been written:  
for empire and power  
the loaded dice of elections;  
for the destitute,  
a piece of land  
as large as the tip of a needle  
under the Land Reforms Law;

lac-houses in harijan colonies,  
war zones in farms and factories;  
the chakravyuha of poverty and want,

### **TALISMAN**

At times I wish  
to escape this periphery  
of which my life is the centre,  
to see what land lies beyond.  
Determined, I leave the circle;  
opening the car door  
I step out cautiously.

It is a strange land:  
void, enormous void,  
like the frustrated midday of my life;  
shadows in the sky drift  
sure and preordained  
like sun and moon;  
time has shrunk to a moment.

I see anew the difference  
between sunrise and sunset,  
between falling in love  
and forgetting;

between seeing and existing.

I see numerous lights—  
they all surround me,  
shoot me through with red and orange;  
dark shadows encircling  
the spaces are erased  
and vanish into the same void.

For the first time I ask myself  
who am I?  
where does my path lead?  
these stairs – ascending or descending?  
who is the witness,  
where is the crown?  
I try to comprehend  
the quiet whisper of stars in the sky;  
the significance of the lines  
on the palms of the wind;  
and what message lies  
in the hieroglyphs of ocean sands;  
the bird that screams in my body's cage,  
what meaning is there?

Sterile spaces come  
looking for shelter inside me;

my mind is filled with an eternal void;  
my shadow grows,  
although they are no phantoms,  
yet, I am frightened of them;  
I walk backwards,  
very cautiously  
the car door I shut;  
And raising walls of glass and steel,  
I rid myself of them all: sky, wind  
And ocean sand,  
And the numerous questions.

And then I look for my talisman  
Amidst newspapers, cigarettes,  
And small coins.

### **THE DAFFODIL**

Neither the teacher  
in the classroom  
nor his confounded pupil,  
nor the westward looking scholar  
has ever seen it with his mortal eyes;  
yet the daffodil,  
swaying and dancing  
in the breeze,

in its golden arrogance,  
flashes upon their inner eye.

The empire may have ended  
like a short spring,  
but the daffodil lives on.  
the empire may have dried up  
like the rain  
or the pearls of dew,  
but the daffodil lives on,  
tossing its head  
in a sprightly dance.

As lively and fresh now  
as in the golden age of imperialism  
its glory untarnished  
in the ruins of empire.  
In the emptiness of lands  
Ravaged by cultural invasions,  
The daffodil shines brightly  
Like an eternal star.

Through the open windows of the mind  
Winds of subculture

From philistine foreign lands  
Rush in and blow us off our feet.  
The daffodil shines as ever before,  
Shamelessly arrogant,  
In the inner eye  
of our very own intellectuals.

- **Jagannath Prasad Das** is a distinguished Oriya poet, playwright and fiction writer. A Ph.D. in Art History, he has authored several books on Orissan art. He lives and works in Delhi.



### **THREE POEMS**

*Stephen Gill*

#### **THE TERRORISTS**

Why  
terrorists profess  
their targets are not innocent  
yet they engineer sneaky devices  
to awaken the dogs of gloom.

Why  
all that runs  
opposite to their fabric  
is unholy for their mind.  
Why do they hold  
their book in one hand  
and the sword in the other.

Why  
hiding behind  
the fungus of hate  
they rape  
the sanctity of life.

Why  
their road to bliss  
litters with lingering bitterness.

Why they are  
merchants uncivilized.

Why  
they are trained  
in the school of anarchy  
that blooms  
as deadly nightshade  
on the fringes of fallacies.

Why  
they talk of harmony  
but plan genocide.

Why  
they cannot see  
the ecstatic dance of peacocks  
and across a borderless horizon  
the dove flying.

Why  
do they promote  
the twisted agenda  
of insanity.

Why  
do they love  
the catechism of ruin.  
Why do they commit outrages  
that are futile.

### **A QUESTION**

If the nuclear bombs drop  
Will the buds bloom again ?  
Will the birds chirp again ?  
Will the spring return again ?

If the nuclear bombs drop  
Will maidens be wedded again ?  
Will love's moon arise again ?  
Will rains kiss the earth again ?

If the nuclear bombs drop  
Will the dawn be born again ?

Will the players play again ?

Will the children swim again ?  
If the nuclear bombs drop  
Will God save anyone ?

Who will cry, who'll console ?  
Will not all be lost ?

### **IF THERE BE A THIRD WORLD WAR**

If another war breaks out

no one may survive  
to watch  
the white front of the moon  
that is often so fascinating  
or to sit in pleasant warmth  
of the sunshine  
or enjoy the sight  
of an unmoving glossy ocean  
under a starlit night.

The sky will glow  
through the mist and rains  
seasons may come and go  
but no singer to glorify them  
and also  
the gleam from the moon  
glancing off the ruffled lakes.

Mother shall be alone  
gases hover on her  
the hounds of disease wander  
living will be  
worse than dying  
if a nuclear war breaks.

- **Dr. Stephen Gill** has authored more than twenty books, including novels, literary criticism, and collections of poems. The Poet Laureate of Ansted University, Canada, he lives in Cornwall and "builds





## Review Essay

### A GRIM RECORD OF MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN:

*Tissa Ajit Jayatilaka*

A Punyakante Wijenaiké's recent work of fiction *An Enemy Within* holds within its covers two novellas, two short stories and a verse. One of the novellas is entitled *An Enemy Within* which also serves as the title of the book. *Duminda* and *Anutta* are the short stories with which *An Enemy Within* begins and ends. The first of the two novellas, *An Enemy Within*, resembles a gory catalogue of the harrowing and tragic experience of some of the victims of the bomb attack of January 1996 that extensively damaged the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and its environs which constitute the heart of the commercial centre of the nation's capital, Colombo. The author tells us that 'the experiences recorded' are factual though she has 'taken the liberty of' rendering them in fictional terms.

*An Enemy Within* is meant to be a grim record of one more instance of our inhumanity to ourselves and, as a sensitive recorder of the passing tragic scene, Wijenaiké has produced a thought provoking work of fiction. While it does not pretend to be a detailed socio-political tract or a comprehensive analysis in literary terms of our national tragedy, it is an honest attempt to come to terms with an aspect of that tragedy. The quotation from Arundhati Roy, "my world has died and I write to mourn its passing", on the page preceding the author's introduction is, therefore, morbidly apposite.

*Duminda*, the short story with which the book begins, sets the tone for *An Enemy Within*. The vulnerability and the seeming helplessness of decent citizens caught up in Sri Lanka internecine national political imbroglio is poignantly captured through *Duminda*, one of its many tragic victims. An intelligent

youth with a bright future before him only a while ago, Duminda is now reduced to an inert bundle of flesh and blood. The despairing cry of his father, "I did not want him to join the war", must surely echo and re-echo from countless homes across the length and breadth of this once blessed country now transformed into a veritable wasteland.

The novella *An Enemy Within* is episodic in structure. The horror of the January 1996 bomb attack is recreated fictionally for the reader by means of the recollections of Raghu, Raj and Kutti, the three "black tigers" who carried out the deadly mission, and those of Anula, Renuka, Anura, Perera, Lionel and Siromi who are among those who become the helpless victims of the politics of dementia that has grabbed contemporary Sri Lanka by its throat. Wijenaikē captures quite well the sense of mutual distrust and the general unease that exist between the Sinhalese and the Tamils living in Colombo. Mrs. Gunasekera, the widowed mother of the dead Renuka, confesses to a not entirely un-understandable though blind and irrational desire to seek an eye for an eye. She wants to go out and kill her Tamil neighbours. She appears to subscribe to one of the conspiracy theories that were in circulation in Colombo in the aftermath of the blast to the effect that Tamils in Colombo had advance knowledge of the impending LTTE attack and, therefore, unlike the Sinhalese, were in a position to take evasive action. Fortunately for one and all she remembers in good time that one of these very same neighbours, Thurairajah, a colleague of Renuka's who in fact travelled in the same vehicle to work as did Renuka daily also perished in the explosion.

Wijenaikē thus expresses vividly the physical as well as the emotional tragedy arising out of political bestiality. To those whose lives were untimely snuffed out there is the relief of the grave. For, after all, there is a finality about death, however painful the passing. To those left behind to endure the loss of loved ones or major physical disability such as losing limbs or their senses of sight or hearing, there is going to be the painful burden of lingering sorrow tinged with grave distrust of their fellow-men. Consider, for example, the predicament of Anura. A young father of two whose wife is now heavy with their third

child, Anura has lost his sight and is about to lose a leg through amputation. His loss of faith is incalculable: "How can I have courage and faith when out of the blue I am struck down like this...? Can I believe in anything, be sure of anything after this?" Anura, however, like most of us, eventually finds meaning through suffering. He finds the strength of character to reconcile himself to his sad lot, learns to "take each day as it comes", and acquires the wisdom to realise "that existence is like a fragile bubble which could burst any moment". By contrast Siromi, the beautician who "straightened other peoples' wrinkles and lines" is unable to straighten herself out emotionally. The bomb seems to have "removed her inner peace, broken it into pieces" and destroyed her being. She turns into "a rain-drop hanging on to a leaf, afraid of evaporating in open sunlight". Hence the enemy within is not merely the suicide bombers who are our fellow-citizens from the North but also our own traumatised selves which make some of us ill-equipped to carry on living in these polluted times where man no longer seems helper to man.

More crucially there is another group of people who are also a part of this enemy within us that Wijenaiké fails to notice. It would indubitably have provided further depth to Wijenaiké's literary treatment of our crisis had she also pointed out our own culpability in this regard. We – those of us, that is, who take no direct part in the physical violence and hence tend to assume the moral high ground – are ourselves responsible to a significant extent for the awful tragedy around us. Had the "silent majority" asserted itself and fought against the purblind political establishment of this country that has led us down the garden path since 1948, the LTTE might never have come upon us. We are partly responsible for the physical violence that pervades our society today by the violence of our inaction of yesterday and the day before!

Mercifully in the midst of these broken spirits and bodies and all of the other physical and emotional debris, Wijenaiké also gives us glimpses of the humanity we, as a people, are capable of. A tri-shaw driver transports the injured to hospital without asking for his fare, a "human crane, a total stranger to the scene ...." works tirelessly "like a machine" to save lives

unknown to him regardless of their race, creed or colour. There is much still to be grateful for, and all seems not yet lost and through Anutta the undefeatable, the protagonist of the concluding short-story bearing his name, Wijenaiké further reinforces our hope for a better tomorrow.

Although episodic in structure, *An Enemy Within* is tightly constructed and the whole hangs together. Wijenaiké's technique of presenting the tragedy through the delineation of the trauma and travails of several non-combatant citizens caught in the cross-fire of political violence is striking. In the several episodes of woe presented in this novella, time past and time present criss-cross, merge and mesh in such a manner as to give the reader the feeling that time, like the hands on the clock tower at Janadhipathi Mawatha after the bomb, is standing still. This juxtaposition of the past and the present in the lives of the afflicted is cleverly and effectively done and it adds a welcome depth to Wijenaiké's technique.

The other novella *Falling in Line* is only tangentially related to the general theme of *An Enemy Within*. One of the protagonists of the novella is Navodit, the young and idealistic medical practitioner, who treats some of the non-fatal casualties of the bomb attack. The awful plight of some of his patients who are psychologically and physically maimed for life figures in his conversations with Annekah, the non-conformist University don, who refuses point blank to fall in line with the old-fashioned ideas on love and marriage that her domineering mother and overbearing aunt (Ranee Nanda) hold. Annekha rejects categorically her elders' anachronistic (to put it charitably) view that "a woman's main role is to marry and bear children". Deepthi, the other major character in the novella, "a woman of depth and substance", out of deference to custom reluctantly agrees to fall in line and makes a disastrous marriage. Haren, her husband, is an unimaginative, lacklustre mamma's boy and offers Deepthi neither love, companionship nor understanding of any kind. Through an exploration of the lives and loves of Deepthi and Annekha, intimate friends from childhood, Wijenaiké presents a profile of the new Sri Lankan woman who has broken free

of the shackles of a past that, for better for worse, continues to hold back the less daring in our society.

*Falling in Line* is a vigorous presentation of a young woman's spirited and meaningful defiance of what is today considered by some to be a "pre-historic" custom – the arranged marriage – by means of which parents and elders pick partners for their daughters as they see fit. Annekha, the career-conscious, independent woman, refuses to play the role of a docile and pliant creature and settle down with a man not of her own choosing. Useful though family connections and financial security might be, love, intellectual compatibility and other related factors that would make for a congenial partnership are the ingredients that Annekha rightly considers to be of greater significance for a good and successful marriage. And she believes that the good doctor, appropriately named Navodit (suggestive of new ideas, new beginning), may well fit the mould of the kind of man she would choose to share her life with.

As with the more successful of Punyakante Wijenaiké's earlier works here, too, in *An Enemy Within* a good plot and sound characterisation – her familiar strengths – are in evidence. Even minor characters such as Old Sopi and Raneé Nanda in *Falling in Line* make their presence vividly felt. Certain infelicities of expression (see, for instance, the opening paragraphs of *Falling in Line*), which a literary editor could so easily have removed, disturb an otherwise limpid prose style of the work under review. And this is true of some of Wijenaiké's other writings as well. On the whole, I believe it is fair to say that a lack of a robust writing style is a general shortcoming in Wijenaiké's fiction to-date. As we notice in *The Waiting Earth* and *Giraya*, in particular, Wijenaiké has the potential to produce a major and significant work of fiction. She is, as we know, capable of plumbing the sombre depths of human experience and exploring the dark passions lurking within us. Regrettably at most times, the language in Wijenaiké's fiction does not rise to the level that her creative imagination does. There seems to be a lack of harmony between her thoughts and her words. I am of the view that it is the tenuity of her language that acts as a constraint and

keeps Punyakante Wijenaikē from producing that outstanding work of fiction she seems quite capable of. But this is a larger issue that needs to be addressed in detail in a different arena.

#### REFERENCE

Wijenaikē, Punyakante. *An Enemy Within*. Vishva Lekha Publications, 1999. 149 pp. Price: Sri Lankan Rupees 90.

- **Dr. Tissa Ajit Jayatilaka** is Executive Director, United States Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission. He has been honoured with Fellowships by Trinity College, U.K., Maryland University, Wake Forest University and Smith College of International Relations in a Globalising World, *Journal of the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka*. His interests include Sri Lankan Literature in English, Sri Lankan and International Politics, Travel, Music, Writing, Cricket, Tennis and Rugby Football.



### UNDOING DUALITIES: DESIRE, SPIRITUALITY, AND FEMINISM IN INDIAN LITERATURE

*Lopamudra Basu*

Neela Bhattacharya Saxena's *In the Beginning is Desire: Tracing Kali's Footprints in Indian Literature* is a creative synthesis of autobiographical reflections, philosophical exegesis, and literary analysis.

The author begins her book by tracing the personal significance of Kali in her life as a Bengali woman who grew up in northern India and emigrated to the United States, later. She recounts her sensory and psychic experiences which propelled her spiritual inquiries about Kali, the beloved family and personal deity of her childhood. Transparent in these autobiographical reflections is Saxena's personal devotion to Kali. Saxena is attracted to the idea of a female deity who symbolizes the beginning of desire, fertility, and creation, in sharp opposition to a male image of god circulated in the Judeo Christian tradition. Saxena's approach to religion and literature is "gynocentric," a term signifying a woman centered

approach to religion, which considers female energy and desire as pivotal to the cycle of life, death, and regeneration.

The quest of uncovering the personal and cultural significance of Kali leads Saxena to engage with Tantric philosophical texts. She defines the tradition of Tantra as one “that does not dichotomize our reality, and affirms most of all our experience of the physical world. It is not inconsequential that practically all Indian religious and philosophical systems including Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism have a Tantric aspect” (Saxena 63). Tantric devotional practices emphasize non-dualist and non-hierarchical principles and the reversal of the traditional ascetic preoccupation with renunciation. Tantric practices demolish the flesh/spirit dichotomy of traditional Hinduism and emphasize the body as a vehicle towards a mystical union with the divine.

In addition to valorizing desire, the figure of Kali accentuates the primacy of female desire as the creative principle of the universe. Saxena points out, “As genetrix of the universe, Kali remains a mark of creativity for its own sake. She is also never an object of desire. It is always her desire that awakens the corpse like Shiva, and the united pleasure of the two inaugurates the beginning of universal creativity” (46). In elaborating on the various dimensions of Kali’s image in the second chapter of her book, she describes the goddess as one “who engulfs the dualities of life and death within her dark body” (61).

Saxena begins her textual exploration of the meaning and presence of Kali by focusing on the hymn in the *Nasadiya Sukta* of the *Rig Veda* which celebrates creation as emerging from primordial desire. From this Vedic creation hymn, Saxena’s textual odyssey moves to a discussion of Rabindranath Tagore’s musical drama *Chandalika*, a twentieth century literary work which depicts the advent of Buddhism as a revolutionary force challenging the domination of caste Hinduism in ancient India. Although Tagore belonged to the reformist Brahmo sect which was against goddess worship, Saxena argues that Kali as desire is a structuring principle of his poetic oeuvre. In *Chandalika*, Saxena traces

the interaction between Buddhism, caste Hinduism, and gynocentric Tantric worship in the characters of the poetic drama. In the play, Prakriti, an untouchable girl, falls in love with Ananda, a Buddhist monk who affirms her humanity by accepting a drink of water from her hands. Prakriti falls in love with Ananda and entreats her mother, Maya, to use her Tantric arts to make Ananda fall in love with her. Ananda is drawn to Prakriti but the play ends with Prakriti's repentance of her actions and begging Ananda for forgiveness. According to Saxena, the play leaves unresolved the debate between the Buddhist advocacy of desire as suffering and sorrow and the ancient Hindu view of desire as creative joy. For Saxena the play's significance lies in the celebration of female desire as propelling the dramatic action of the play.

Another play which Saxena examines is Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*. Once again this is a modern Indian play but dramatizes an ancient Indian story originally collected in the *Kathasaritsagar*. Saxena attempts a Tantric reading of the play by locating in its plot and subject matter a debate about *stridharma* (duty of a woman) against the cultural backdrop of the increasing influence of the *Dharmashastras* in Hindu society which were cementing a more rigid Brahmanic religion than the earlier Vedic traditions. The action of *Havyadana* centers around the triangular relationship between Padmini, her husband Devadatta, an intellectual, and his friend Kapila, a handsome ironsmith. The erotic jealousies of the trio reach a crisis when Devadatta, overcome with jealousy and suspicion, decapitates himself at a deserted Kali temple. Kapila, overcome by guilt on seeing his dead friend, also commits suicide. Kali, the goddess, seeing Padmini's despair grants her the blessing that they will be restored to life if she rejoins their heads. The two men are restored to life but Padmini, perhaps acting on unconscious desires, switches the heads of the two friends. The dilemma regarding who is Padmini's husband now is resolved by the rationale of the mediator sage that the head is supreme over the body and therefore Padmini's husband is the body which contains his head. Although this is a kind of wish fulfillment for Padmini, over time, Kapila's body weakens under the influence of Devdatta's head. Padmini has another encounter with Kapila,



now in Devdatta's body. When Devdatta arrives at the scene, the meeting eventually leads to a confrontation and a fatal duel which kills both of them. Padmini prepares to die at the funeral pyre for the three. Saxena considers the plot "as a Tantric metaphor where the power of desire is portrayed as the primordial mover of all action, but it is only in recognizing its relationship with death that the human soul can recognize the ultimate non-duality presented in the form of Kali" (165).

Saxena's quest for Kali leads her next to a study of Ismat Chughtai's novel *The Crooked Line*. The most remarkable contribution of this chapter is Saxena's attempt to draw connections between Sufi mysticism in Islam and the Tantric traditions. The attempt to read a novel written by an Indian Muslim woman about Muslim society in pre-independence India through the lens of Tantric philosophy is a courageous attempt to affirm the secular, pluralistic heritage of India at a time of the ascendancy of the Hindu Right. Saxena reads the quest of Shamman, the heroine of *The Crooked Line*, to find herself as an expression of Kali's creative desire. The novel charts Shamman's unconventional life choices, her childhood, growth into puberty, her romantic encounters with several men, her refusal of a traditional marriage, her involvement with political and social causes till her ill fated romance with the Irish soldier Ronnie Taylor. Although this inter-racial romance cannot withstand the social ostracism and prejudice it encounters, Shamman becomes a mother through this relationship. Saxena charts the cyclical trajectory of the novel "from womb to womb," and argues that Shamman "finds her reality, her haqq and a strange annihilation of her small self in motherhood (205). While the primacy of female desire and motherhood is central in the image of Kali, Saxena's reading here seems to subsume the crookedness, the unpredictability of Shamman's life and choices to the final triumphant trope of motherhood. Reading *The Crooked Line* through the structure of its ending runs into the danger of diluting much of its radical rethinking of Muslim women's life choices in early twentieth century India.

The final three chapters of Saxena's book focus on texts which dramatize the colonial, nationalist, and postcolonial

epochs of Indian writing. In these chapters, Saxena combines her philosophical approach to Indian literature with an engagement with postcolonial feminism. In the chapter "Desire Betrayed," Saxena focuses on two parallel autobiographical texts, Maitreyi Devi's *It Does Not Die* and Mircea Eliade's *Bengal Nights* and the conditions of reception of both these novels to document the painful and heartbreaking aspects of desire and betrayal in a social and political milieu structured by racial and gender inequalities. Both Maitreyi Devi and Eliade's novels draw on their ill-fated romance when Eliade was a visitor at Maitreyi's father's house. Eliade published his autobiographical account in Romanian which was translated into French in 1950 as *La Nuit Bengali*. Eliade's version imagines the household to be conspiring to marry Maitreyi off to him. Maitreyi Devi's version of the same events was published as *Na Hanyate (It Does Not Die)* in Bengali in 1974 after she had traveled alone to Chicago to confront Eliade for his distortions of the romance. Her version does not vilify the Eliade character and she depicts the ending of the romance as occurring when her father discovers the lovers and expels Eliade from his house. More interesting to Saxena than the "He Said She Said" aspects of the two tales is the manner both texts were received and the critical responses still circulating about these texts. In her own reading of Eliade, Saxena is dismayed at the deep prejudices revealed in the orientalist presentation of Maitreyi. It is even more shocking for Saxena that in the reception of the parallel texts produced by the University of Chicago Press, reviewers and critics are oblivious of the orientalist presentation of Maitreyi in Eliade's version and are dismissive of the quality of Maitreyi Devi's writing. However, in charting the responses to both texts, Saxena reveals that Indian women readers of Maitreyi Devi like Anita Desai, Meenakshi Mukherjee, and Ginu Kamani have been overwhelmingly sympathetic to Maitreyi Devi's work even in translation. This discrepancy in responses of western and Indian critics alerts Saxena to the perspectival nature of literary reception. Her own reading of the texts is overwhelmingly sympathetic to Maitreyi Devi's point of view and she records her disappointment at the cultural limitations

of a very renowned and admired scholar of India, Mircea Eliade.

In her chapter discussing Tagore's *Gora*, Saxena concentrates on Tagore and the question of nationalism. The novel dramatizes desire as "disrupting the male discourse of identity" ( 247). In *Gora*, Tagore subjects the discourse of nationalism to a critical scrutiny and alerts readers to its limitations. Gora is a white man who is unaware that he has been adopted by a Hindu family, and he enters into a radical reclaiming of Hindu identity to the exclusion of reformist Brahmo religion. However it is through the women in his life, his adoptive mother Anandamoyi and his beloved Sucharita, a girl from Brahmo society, that Gora undergoes a metamorphosis and an acceptance of his complex racial and cultural identity. Saxena reads Gora's acceptance of his love for Sucharita and his acceptance of water from Lachmiya, the Christian woman, as his initiation into Kali mantra, a consciousness of which dissolves all divisions and liberates human beings from the schisms of caste and gender.

In the final chapter of her book, Saxena examines Arundhati Roy's novel through the prism of desire. She reads *The God of Small Things* as an "indictment of all totalizing systems—from aristocracy to Marxism, Hindu casteism to Christian moralism..." (269). Saxena points to Roy's postmodern rejection of all Enlightenment narratives of progress and plenitude. She considers *The God of Small Things* to be documenting "the psychological impact of colonization" (275). In a novel which is so full of despair, the only redeeming aspect is the love of Ammu and Velutha even if it ends with tragic consequences. Saxena argues that this love story cannot be dismissed as Aijaz Ahmad has done as merely the politics of the erotic. She contends that although these small acts of personal rebellion do not take the place of mass movements but they are "intensely liberating moments that free one from the clutches of androcentric laws" (285).

*In the beginning is Desire* is a unique reading of texts in modern Indian literature combining the interpretative vision of Indian philosophy, particularly the world of Tantra, with

postmodern and postcolonial feminist approaches. It is rich in its engagement of philosophic, religious, and literary texts. Reading a diverse body of literary texts through the overarching structure of Kali yields mixed results. While it seems to work very effectively for works like *Chandalika* and *Hayavadana*, it seems more forcefully imposed on some other texts. One of the most remarkable features of this work on Indian literature is that most literary texts discussed are in Indian languages other than English. This is a considered personal attempt to reverse the asymmetrical power enjoyed by English as a global language. While engaging with Kali and Tantric practices, Saxena is deeply critical of religious fundamentalisms and attempts constantly to reinscribe the syncretic and pluralistic religious heritage of India.

#### REFERENCE

Saxena, Neela Bhattacharya. *In the Beginning is Desire: Tracing Kali's Footprints in Indian Literature*. New Delhi: Indialog, 2004. 324 pp. Rs. 295.

- **Dr. Lopamudra Basu** is Assistant Professor of English at University of Wisconsin-Stout. She received her Ph.D. in English from the Graduate Center of The City University of New York. She completed her undergraduate education and received an MA from the University of Delhi, India. Her scholarly interests are Postcolonial literatures of South Asia and Africa, Asian-American Studies, Transnational Feminist Theory and the Contemporary World Novel.



#### GUILELESS WORD

**V.V.B. Rama Rao**

Dr. Jagannath Prasad Das is always referred to as Jay Pee Das in the Delhi circle of litterateurs. Profound, if not prolific, he has the unique distinction of writing a very few poems and publishing them after years of deliberation. A researcher in Art

History, he brings into his verse a fine timbre of social criticism. The book under review is a selection of poems rendered into English by diverse hands besides the poet's himself and edited by a university professor of Translation, Paul St-Pierre of Montreal.

Paul St-Pierre in his insightful introduction describes the threefold division of the work as broadly linked: the first to historical events, the second to urban scenes and the third to the 'incommensurability of the outside world and human experience of it'. These poems were produced during the last three decades but finely epigraphed with lines from Bertolt Brecht:

*Truly, I live in dark times!  
The guileless word is folly.  
A smooth forehead  
suggests insensitivity.  
The man who laughs  
has simply not yet heard  
the terrible news.*

*Dark Times* is not just the title of the book: it is the very essence of the poetic vision of the artist. The work, if it should really be separated into sections, could as well be labeled thus: Darkness Visible, Darkness Immitigable and Darkness (again) Irreversible. The gloom is not the consequence of the much-touted Globalization, still less it is a matter of the spirit of the times. It seems to have gone into the core of the human heart, with heads totally lost owing to insensitivity. No wonder, the editor puts it down succinctly: "If the tone of the poems is somewhat sombre, ..." But then the charm of the collection lies in the 'guileless word', a phrase crafted beautifully by Brecht. It is all dark, dark and dark again, only the intensity varies. The projection of the vision has a purpose, which is fulfilled to the satisfaction of the sensitive reader who never loses his faith in *vak* (Sanskrit for verbal expression).

Here is a sense of frustration, too agonizing to articulate. This could be the reason for the thinness of the poet's output. For the reader the poems offer a sobering effect on the turbulent, thinking mind making him look deeper into the human condition and, not stopping there, to turn the searchlight inward and become a little soft. But here is the important point: the work does not degrade into empty moralizing – a trap into

which many a poet could not help falling. "The poet who says, / As with history, to poetry / there is no end" ("After Gujarat", p.17) reveals his insight into the human condition and the tears in the nature of things. This is the blessed quality of a great poet, essential for imaginative fecundity. The distinguishing (and also the disgust-generating among the sensitive) of the degenerate times, very fortunately, pushes upward the underlying *aardrata*, an untranslatable (for me) Sanskrit word. *Aardrata* is the 'wetness' of the heart, feeling and sensibility. The cataclysmic, disastrous events all over the globe, vast, troubled, ravaged areas would offer a dismal sight. The scene is dismal but not so to the thinking mind, which has a flair to look deep, understand and empathize.

"Mahabharat" is a poem, which offers a comparison between these, our times and those in the days of that universal epic. Those were dark times and ours are just a little darker. Both are immitigable and irreversible, given the crumbling ethos, once pristine, then and now. The poem ends with a comma, perhaps a clue to the reader to complete it to conclude it to his/her own satisfaction and I, for one, would simply conclude: virtue is the sad casualty (with apologies to the poet for taking undue liberties with the text, sacred for any poet). The "disrobed helplessness" (p. 25) is one of the finest and the most memorable of the poet's coinages which goes far beyond suggesting the disrobing of Draupadi, the most crucial incident in our cultural, national epic and *itihaas* (History is poor translation for this pregnant concept).

The most touching poem and the one replete with *aardrata* describes Kalahandi, a district in Orissa, which belied and defeated great dreams after our tryst with destiny. A journalist friend of mine went there once, his heart bled (sorry, cliches are inevitable sometimes) and he started an NGO after going to the h(e)aven of affluence in another continent. Still, Kalahandi remains a blot on civilization, stands a mute victim of pervasive inequity, insensibility and the horror that existence has come to be, thanks to the powers of resounding rhetoric accumulated by vulturous big wigs. Like the principal in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, we are bound to exclaim "Why this is Kalahandi, nor am I out of it!" The words "Shiva has spilt his seed here" (A.K. Ramanujan) could well be apposite even here. The poet says: "The God of rain / turned away his face" ("Kalahandi", p.21).

Any leader would cease to be a human being, if Kalahandi does not move him. But look! Here is an aerial survey:

*From the airplane  
The flood ravaged countryside  
Looks like a surreal painting  
To be set in an ornate frame  
And hung on the walls  
Of unrepentant souls* ("Aerial Survey", p.88)

No matter what critics may say or believe, poetry in our country has come to be a device for sharpening social awareness and bringing change. J. P. Das's preoccupation is to make us think of the injustice and inequity rampant all around:

*Wits and poetasters  
Offered themselves  
As retainers  
For the entertainment  
Of the court* ("Tutelage", p.30)

Could there be darker times than these where poetry is also produced to order and sold for a price?

A word about the rich element of Nativism in the collection. The poems were originally written for our audience, in Oriya, with allusions to our classical 'texts' (if Epics are taboo) and a foreigner would have to work hard to get at the full import of these soul-felt expressions. Someone has to play the exegete to the finer points in these poems, as Mallinadha Suri did for Kalidasa in Telugu. It took several exegeses by brilliant exegetes including the poet himself for readers to understand the multi-layered meaning and import of Eliot's *Wasteland*. To help the foreigner, a glossary and brief would be useful.

Good old Kipling, who made the statement "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet" would feel disproved at least for once by this poet of *Dark Times*. *Naada* is the basis of creation, the manifestation of the Supreme Divine according to our oriental faith and *vak* is one of the Supreme Divine's manifestations. The Western seer of aesthetics Walter Pater declared: "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music." Music is but *naada*. 'Dark' is not just a state of mind, it is the attribute of the times we live

in and the attribute of the times when Draupadi suffered too. It is primordial as well as contemporary.

J.P. Das has his personal views about literary translation too. He wrote to me in a letter: "Translations should ideally be done by a speaker (in case of literature, preferably by a writer) of the target language. Here, unfortunately, so far as translation into English is concerned, it is usually done by a speaker of the same language...While translating Oriya poetry into English, I had found the collaboration with Arelene Zide very fruitful." This is true. Zide roped in Indian English poets of repute, if not native speakers of English, to vet all the renderings of our translators here before producing *In Their Own Voice*. Not only could J.P. Das find a native speaker of English (Canadian, though) but also a funding agency -- The Quebec Fund for Research on Society and Culture -- to assist publishing. This is no mean achievement. And then, that Fund too deserves our admiration.

#### REFERENCE

Das, Jagannath Prasad. *Dark Times*, New Delhi: Virgo Publications, 2005. 88 pp. Price: Rs. 190.

- **Dr. V.V.B. Rama Rao**, a retired ELT professional, is a widely published creative writer and translator.





# RE-MARKINGS

[www.remarkings.com](http://www.remarkings.com)

Fashion is  
something barbarous,  
for it produces  
innovation  
without reason  
and  
imitation  
without benefit.

*George Santayana*

ISSN 0972-611X