

www.re-markings.com

RE-MARKINGS

Vol. 12 No. 1 March 2013

Mo Yan

Rabindranath Tagore

William Shakespeare

V.S. Naipaul

Cyprian Ekwensi

E.M. Forster

Lorraine Hansberry

Ntozake Shange

Adrienne Kennedy

Sri Aurobindo

Arundhati Roy

Vikram Seth

Chitra Banerjee

Divakaruni

Bama

Eunice de Souza

Amitav Ghosh

Anita Desai

Shashi Deshpande

Jonah Raskin

Patricia Prime

Naxalism

Language

Empowerment

Short Story

Review Essay

CHIEF EDITOR : NIBIR K. GHOSH

EDITOR : A. KARUNAKER

RE-MARKINGS

Vol. 12 No. 1 March 2013

ISSN 0972-611X

Re-Markings, a biannual international journal of English Letters aims at providing a healthy forum for scholarly and authoritative views on broad sociopolitical 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

Advisory Board

Charles Johnson
Jayanta Mahapatra
Amritjit Singh
Ruediger Kunow
S. Ramaswamy
Jonah Raskin
C.R. Visveswara Rao

Chief Editor

Nibir K. Ghosh

Editor

A. Karunaker

Executive Editor

Sundeep Arora

Associate Editor

Katy Whipple

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 a disk in text format along with a hard copy to the Chief Editor/Editor or through e-mail attachment to remarkings@hotmail.com. Each contribution must be accompanied by a declaration that it is an original contribution and has not been published anywhere else.

Chief Editor

Nibir K. Ghosh,
68 New Idgah Colony,
Agra-282001, U.P. (INDIA).
Telephone : +91 562 2230242
Cell.: +91 98970 62958
e-mail : 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

Cover Design :
Allied Computer, Agra

Printed at : Aydee Offset, Agra

Copyright © : Nibir K. Ghosh

Subscription Rates:

Single Copy	: ₹150	\$15	€12.
Annual (2 Issues)	: ₹300	\$30	€23.
Three Years (6 Issues)	: ₹750	\$65	€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

Democracy [is] a big balloon, filled with gas or hot air, and sent up so that you shall be kept looking up at the sky whilst other people are picking your pockets. When the balloon comes down to earth every five years or so you are invited to get into the basket if you can throw out one of the people who are sitting tightly in it; but as you can afford neither the time nor the money, the balloon goes up again with much the same lot in it and leaves you where you were before.

—George Bernard Shaw, Preface to *The Apple Cart*.

Whenever I hear a debate or discussion on Democracy, I cannot help recall the above statement from the play I had read and admired as an undergraduate many years ago. If writers and intellectuals have always come forward to denounce the ills of dictatorship in all its various manifestations, they have not failed to make adequate use of the freedom of speech and expression to register their displeasure or discontent against the pitfalls of governments that claim to hitch their wagon to the ideal “of the people, by the people, for the people” adage. It may be often seen that low turnouts at periodical circuses called “general elections” are attributed to indifferent voters who prefer to sit at home, glued to the idiot box, firm in their belief that, in any case, in spite of them, the balloon would go up again “with much the same lot in it” and leave the ordinary citizen where he was before.

No matter how disillusioned one may be with Democracy, the timeline spanning the last two months of the year gone by sufficiently inspires our faith in this mode of government at least with regard to the United States of America and India, the world’s most powerful and largest democracies respectively.

The triumphant second coming of Barack Obama to the globe’s most enviable presidential abode is a grand narrative that celebrates what visionaries like Martin Luther King Jr. had envisioned half a century ago: that one day his four little children would be able to “live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” In Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, the Statue of Liberty is shown to be lost in the fog. With Obama’s resounding repeat victory the Statue has become increasingly more visible and writers may not find it compelling anymore to append to their works titles like “Invisible Man” or “Nobody Knows My Name.” If Obama’s charismatic charm catapulted him to the position of the most powerful man on earth, no less noteworthy is the glory of Narendra

Modi who has returned with a massive mandate to be at the helm of affairs in Gujarat for the third time in a row. Riding on the crest of the wave called “good governance, entrepreneurship, economic growth and development,” Modi swayed the minds and hearts of the sensitive electorate to vanquish an opposition bent on playing the communal card to unnerve him. In both cases under reference a major share of the credit must go to the electorate – located half a world apart – that cut across the bounds of communal and racial minefields to ensure that the people they were sending up in the balloon would make a big difference to the space inhabited by the citizenry below.

Before closing this interface with the esteemed members of the *Re-Markings* fraternity, I must allude to another event in the timeline mentioned above, an event that has impacted not only those up in the balloon but also those accustomed to constantly look up to the folks in the balloon. While the advocates of progress and change were celebrating Modi’s victory, the entire nation was rudely awakened from its complacent slumber by the sinister tidings of the brutal gangrape of a young girl in the heart of the nation’s capital. The outrage the incident provoked was so intense that people from all walks of life, especially those in their teens, armed with lighted candles and fired by spirits not to submit or yield, spontaneously strove together in sub-zero temperature to bring to senses the people they had sent up in the balloon. The fact that all revolutions are inspired by ideas and charismatic leadership seemed redundant as the tidal wave of protest ventured forth without any visible leadership to strike at the corridors of power and bring the government down on its knees.

It is exceedingly sad that the victim had to pay with her life to bring about such a national catharsis. It ought to make us realize once and for all that even in democratic political spaces it is incumbent on all of us as individual citizens to exercise our solidarity in compelling the powers that be to answer whether they are the powers that ought to be. It is providential, in a way, that the majority of essays in this volume focus on the need to change mindsets and mental blocks to negotiate gender margins in an essentially patriarchal setup often geared to rule and control “half the sky.” This issue is, therefore, dedicated to the heroism and sacrifice of the tragic girl who will continue to haunt every Indian’s conscience and consciousness for a long, long time.

Nibir K. Ghosh
Chief Editor

CONTENTS

Mo Yan, the Nobel Prize for Literature, and *Red Sorghum*
Walter S.H. Lim / 7

S.L. Bhyrappa: A Profile
S. Ramaswamy / 16

Cyprian Ekwensi's Jagua Nana: A Critique of the City
Kiran Thakur / 19

The Golden Gate and Rusted Relationships
Kaustav Chakraborty / 25

Naipaul's *The Masque of Africa*: A Study
T. Jeevan Kumar / 32

Recast in Feminist Light:
Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*
Namrata Parmar / 39

Caste, Class and Resistance in Bama's
"Pongal" and "Half-Sari"
Dinesh Kumar / 45

Discourse of Subversion: The Poetry of Eunice de Souza
Mithilesh K. Pandey / 51

Diasporic Strain in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*
Anurag Bihari / 56

Inner Fibres of Human Emotions in
Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*
Deepali Sharma / 62

Politics of Gender in Shakespearean Comedies
Meera Mohanty / 67

Naxalism: Some Insights
Kamlakar K. Askar / 73

Muddle and Mystery in Forster's *A Passage to India*
Chandra Prabha / 78

African American Feminist Drama
Tanuja Mathur / 82

Far from the Madding World: Maya in
Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*
Arvind M.. Nawale / 87

Existential Humanism in Shashi Deshpande's
That Long Silence
Savita Rani / 91

The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo: A Note
Kuldeep K. Mohadikar / 95

Empowerment through Language
Prabha Pant / 100

The Giver (Short Story)
Anil Z. Mathew / 103

Where are the Tagore's of Today?
Review of *Rabindranath Tagore: The Living Presence*
Jonah Raskin / 108

"I Love to Talk of Darkness"
Review of *Shadows of the Real.*
Patricia Prime / 110

MO YAN, THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE, AND *RED SORGHUM*

Walter S.H. Lim

Before Mo Yan (pseudonym for Guan Moye) was announced the recipient of the 2012 Nobel Prize for literature, his name was vaguely familiar to me, first encountered in association with the movie *Red Sorghum* (1987) directed by Zhang Yimou. It was only after Mo Yan's winning of the Nobel Prize that I searched for Howard Goldblatt's English translation of *Red Sorghum*, a novella first published in China (1986) and later expanded into a five-part novel (1989). Winning the Nobel Prize confers immediate fame; controversy, however, often attends such fame as questions are raised concerning the politics surrounding the conferral of an award. In the case of Mo Yan, the prize has generated vociferous criticism by critics of the Chinese government's record on human rights and basic freedoms. In particular, Mo Yan's position as vice-president of the Communist Party-backed Writers' Association, his comments on censorship, and his lackluster support for the release of the jailed Nobel Peace Prize recipient Liu Xiaobo have all been invoked to reinforce the message that the Nobel Committee's choice of Mo Yan is nothing short of a disaster.

In embracing Stockholm's recognition of Mo Yan's literary accomplishment, the Chinese government reveals itself holding a not very consistent attitude toward the institution of the Nobel Prize. In 2012, Beijing's jubilation stands in stark contrast to its scathing reaction to the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Liu Xiaobo. Where in 2010, China viewed the presentation of the award to Liu as a "desecration" of the Nobel tradition—representing yet one other instance of the liberal West's imposition of its political and cultural values on a sovereign nation—in 2012, Mo Yan's reception of literature's highest prize is celebrated as Chinese literature's coming of age, the achievement of a people, culture, and nation. Chinese literature can now proudly claim its place in world literature, unloading historical anxieties about cultural and literary lack that are a hangover from China's humiliating encounter with the West in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

- **Dr. Walter S.H. Lim** is an Associate Professor of English Literature at the National University of Singapore.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

S.L. BHYRAPPA: A PROFILE

S. Ramaswamy

S.L. Bhyrappa (1931) has been striding like a literary colossus through his twenty novels over a writing span of half a century. *Bhimakaya* was written when he was still a college student at the age of eighteen in 1952 and was published for the first time in 1959, with a recent edition appearing in 2005. His latest novel is *Mandra* (2002). He was born in a small village in the Hassan district of the old Mysore State, the heart of the Kannada-speaking people known as the "Cocoanut County." It is said that fact is stranger than fiction. Bhyrappa's life is a saga of courage, of fighting adversity and uncompromising honesty. Some of the jobs he has done like working as a common coolie in the Bombay Central Railway Station, as a coach driver in Bombay, a hotel waiter in village restaurants, a gate keeper in a village tent cinema, selling sherbath in village fairs and a travelling salesman for agarbattis confirm his proletarian boyhood. The other end of his career consists of his being a Professor of Philosophy and a Ph.D. in Aesthetics, an Education Officer at N.C.E.R.T. Delhi, his polyglot abilities of speaking Gujarati and Hindi and being a formidable scholar in the philosophies of the West as well as the East. His vast reading ranges from the complete *Dharmasastra* to *Simone de Beauvoir*. He is as conversant with the intricacies of the *Saptha Bhangi Nyaya* of Jainism, the sophisticated distinctions between *Hinayana* and *Mahayana Buddhism* with *Sautrantika*, *Madhyamika* and *Yogachara* schools as with Kant and Hegel, Bradley and Whitehead and the Existentialist philosophers like Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Sorensen, Sartre and Camus.

Travels

Bhyrappa never simply visits a place but explores it. He is no cloistered arm-chair philosopher or the proverbial ivory tower intellectual. His hobbies are swimming and mountaineering. He has travelled all over the world and in out of the way places too. For example, he knows his Ankor Wat in Cambodia as well as he knows his Machu Picchu in Peru, a place that was not discovered by the Whites until 1911 in South America. He knows the Himalayas like the back of his hand and has even taken a dip in the Manasa Sarovar. Naturally climbing Fuji in Japan was child's play for him.

- **Professor S. Ramaswamy** is the recipient of three Fulbright Fellowships and a winner of Phi Beta Kappa award.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana*:

A Critique of the City

Kiran Thakur

Cyprian Ekwensi, one of Nigeria's best known writers, is deeply concerned with the quality of modern Nigerian life especially with the ways in which traditional values and institutions were redefined as a result of the presence of Europeans in West Africa during the colonial period. His novels portray the conflicts which the colonial presence promoted in Nigeria and the resultant cultural, social and political changes. Though politically independent, Nigeria still suffers from the aftereffects of colonization, specifically the colonization of the mind. Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* is the most representative work of fiction in this regard.

The African populace in the post-independent phase looked forward to a bright future but, contrary to their wishes, the struggle for freedom continued beneath the surface and the power centre shifted from village to the city resulting in the erosion of traditional structure of society that led to various social and psychological conflicts. It was the result of those colonial forces which introduced urbanization with the ulterior motive of separating the Africans from their family, clan and tribal authority as well as social codes which originally guided their thoughts. The urban town has been the inheritance of colonialism. In the novel, the capital city, Lagos forms the nucleus and power center of the state, whereas earlier the tribal villagers were the hubs of all social and communal activities. This shifting of center from village to city is due to the lure of urbanization which undoubtedly is the result of colonialism.

Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* is famous as an iconic feminist text but this is simultaneously one of the pioneering texts engaged with the ills of urbanization. Jagua is the central figure in the novel through whose eyes one may glimpse a brilliant trace of the confusion and intensity with all its pleasures and hazards of Nigerian post-independent city life in Lagos.

- **Dr. Kiran Thakur** is Lecturer in Communication Skills, Department of Management and Social Sciences, NIT, Hamirpur (Himachal Pradesh).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

THE GOLDEN GATE AND RUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

Kaustav Chakraborty

As he grew up he had been faced with the choice all homosexuals must make between sticking to the rules—perhaps for a lifetime—or making sense of life by following the irrational, often painful truths revealed within themselves. Curiously, scepticism and doubt are second nature to those who choose the second path.

- David Marr, *Patrick White: A Life*

The phobia regarding the non-conformist sexuality is a feature that one finds not only in characters like Ed of *The Golden Gate*, but even among its commentators. Only a few critics dared to probe the minefield of such untouchable themes like bisexuality and homosexuality, and that too mostly by critiquing and questioning their morality and/or social value. Rowena Hill charges in her review that, “the greatest flaw in the book [is] a flaw in values” (Hill 88). Hill centres her argument on the issue of homosexuality: “‘Make love not war’ is much too simplistic an equation, and we object to the proportions in your scale of values, O California!” (89). Another critic, Makarand Paranjape, calls this controversial issue, “one of the problems of the book” (Paranjape 68). He views Phil’s marriage with Liz as restoring the norm for intimate relationships, and “Phil and Liz are the new unit which upholds the norms of the book” (69). Phil’s bisexuality, however, remains “threatening” to the stability of that norm. Paranjape asks, “What if he was to take another male lover after marrying Liz?”

Vikram Seth uses his platform as an author to share secrets with the reader about the characters and their history, to jab at cultural prejudices, and to explore the popular culture of 1980s California. *The Golden Gate* is set in the San Francisco Bay area. Various portions of Seth's “novel in verse” both bless and question those who struggle in their lives to create a worthy contribution to the world as we know it, with their

- **Dr. Kaustav Chakraborty** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Southfield College, Darjeeling (West Bengal).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

NAIPAUL'S *THE MASQUE OF AFRICA*: A STUDY

T. Jeevan Kumar

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (1932-), the winner of Nobel Prize for Literature 2001, travel writer, essayist of Indian ancestry, is considered to be the leading novelist of the English speaking Caribbean. His works have made him a much-admired writer in contemporary times and earned him a knighthood in 1989. They deal with the cultural confusion of the Third World and the problem of an outsider, a feature of his own experience as an Indian in the West Indies, a West Indian in England, and a nomadic intellectual in a postcolonial world. His novels mix satire with humour and confront issues such as exile and the search for identity as well as the tension between traditional cultures and contemporary values. The Swedish Academy, while awarding the Noble Prize, described Naipaul as "the analyst of the destinies of empires in the moral sense: what they do to human beings. His authority as a narrator is grounded in the memory of what others have forgotten, the history of the vanquished."¹

*The Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief*² (2010), Naipaul's latest full-length work of non-fiction, is a quest through the continent for the spirit of African belief, the belief systems that preceded the arrival of Christianity and Islam, in keeping with the legacy of Joseph Conrad, who is referred to several times in the book. It is a travel book with a specific purpose, particularly to witness African belief by going far back to the beginning of things.

The novel is an account of Naipaul's journey through six countries with a view to investigating the effects of African belief on the progress of civilization. The journey across the African continent takes Naipaul from Uganda, where he lived for a short while in the 1960s, to Nigeria, then to Gabon via the Ivory Coast and Ghana, and finally to South Africa. During his journey, he attends rituals and ceremonies, interrogates fetish priests, diviners, soothsayers, discourses with teachers, writers, academics, pharmacists, kings, queens and chiefs, businessmen, friends of friends and other African intellectuals. These visits transcend the confines of the particular and acquire universality of appeal in earnestly navigating the African mind.

- **Dr. T. Jeevan Kumar** is Head, Department of English, P.V.K.K. P.G. College, Anantapur (Andhra Pradesh).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

**RECAST IN FEMINIST LIGHT:
DIVAKARUNI'S *THE PALACE OF ILLUSIONS***

Namrata Parmar

Since ages the fire-born princess of Panchaal has had a bad publicity in the world of men. She has been casually and brutally called a Kritya (one who brings doom to her clan). The present paper focuses on the ambivalence about this term because the question arises whether she was a nemesis or she herself was doomed from the start. The book *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) is narrated by Panchaali from her perspective and is a deeply humane story about a woman born into a man's world and her various adjustments. Divakaruni has immortalized Draupadi in her cherished work by taking us back to the age of *Mahabharata*. Divakaruni gives a new twist to the great Indian epic by casting it from the perspective and psychological mirror of Draupadi. Divakaruni shows that conventionally either woman has been left to fend for herself or she has to blindly follow the dictates of man. Also, that a woman like Draupadi never had any important women friends. This realization was to greatly influence Divakaruni's writing which focuses on women's relationships. Visi Tilak, in a review of *The Palace of Illusions*, says: "Though she was destined to change the course of history, even as she arose from the sacred fire and smoke, Draupadi, one of the main characters in this tale and the wife of the five Pandava brothers, is traditionally left playing a supporting character role. What Chitra Divakaruni has done in her latest novel *The Palace of Illusions* is to skillfully narrate this story from Draupadi's point of view, and more significantly a woman's perspective" (Tilak).

Panchaali (a name that has been given to Draupadi after her wedding) is humiliated in a court where the Kaurava brothers attempt to disrobe her. Panchaali's wrath is instrumental in bringing about the *Mahabharata* war where great many lives are lost and families are obliterated. What moves a conscientious reader in this work is altogether different. The period of *Mahabharata* was a period of relatively greater freedom for women than the era when *Ramayana* was scripted. The question that comes to mind is how during three critical junctures in her lifetime Draupadi cannot take a decision herself.

- **Namrata Parmar** is Assistant Professor in the Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

CASTE, CLASS AND RESISTANCE IN BAMA'S "PONGAL" AND "HALF-SARI"

Dinesh Kumar

Bama is an emerging literary voice from Tamil Nadu. She has become a name in Dalit literature with her novels *Sangati* (1992), *Vanman* (2002) and her memoir, *Karukku*. Her novels and short stories, set in Dalit Tamil Nadu, articulate experiences of caste and class based oppression and discrimination. Further, these narratives also explore the 'weapons of the weak', the subversive agencies which the marginalised use to interrogate and resist the hegemonies of caste and class. Moreover, Bama's narratives are marked with a touch of rustic humour based on local idiom and the Tamil vernacular. This humour is both the style and philosophy of her works that show how lower caste life strides forward with its raw energy and vitality, even in the face of exploitation.

"Pongal" and "Half-sari" are two stories in Bama's collection, *Harum-Scarum Saar and Other Stories*. Both these stories articulate caste and class – two delicate issues which are generally wished away and rarely discussed in Indian society. Bama provides these issues extensive treatment in the two stories mentioned above to show how oppressive circles are made of casteism and feudalism in rural Tamil Nadu. Further, these stories put forth plain narratives with minimal literary and technical innovations to capture a distinct Dalit directness in articulating issues such as labour, exploitation, discrimination and rural life.

"Pongal" is a story that narrates the experiences of Madasami, a *Parayan*. Madasami, a Dalit farmhand who works for his feudal landlord, is preparing to take a few gifts to his master on the occasion of *Pongal*. He takes a rooster, two sugarcane sticks, a big bunch of bananas and some rice in expectation of getting some *pongal* and a towel from his master.

- **Dr. Dinesh Kumar** is Associate Professor, Department of English, V.G. Vaze College, Mulund East, Mumbai.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

DISCOURSE OF SUBVERSION: THE POETRY OF EUNICE DE SOUZA

Mithilesh K. Pandey

Eunice de Souza is one of the major modern Indian women poets whose poetic priorities involve power equations. Like Kamala Das's bold confessions and Imtiaz Dharker's rebellion against purdah system, Eunice de Souza's subtle subversion of androcentric canons is an evidence of effective female voices involved in the power struggle to dislodge patriarchy. A Mumbai based Goan Catholic, de Souza has four volumes – *Fix*, *Women in Dutch Painting*, *Ways of Belonging* and *Selected and New Poems* – that deal with her protesting response to the surrounding reality. The present essay attempts a feminist reading of her poems to identify her subtle strategies to decentre the male situation.

De Souza began with full awareness of the Indian situation in which women have to groan under regimented propositions unlike their male counterparts. In her first collection of poems *Fix*, she depicts the real picture of the Goan Catholic community which was as suppressive as other religious groups. She loves to narrate the hidden secrets of the female body without losing control over her diction. In the poem "Sweet Sixteen," for instance, she points out sarcastically the inferior position of women under the patriarchal framework: "Mamas/never mentioned menses./A nun screamed;/You vulgar girl/don't say brassieres/say bracelets" (SP 39). Her Catholic characters are, as Veronica Brady observes, "an embodiment of the complacency, the closed heart and mind which constitutes evil in de Souza's world because it entails the refusal of freedom, the passion for the possible" (Brady 113). Sharing Dharker's concern, the poet brilliantly describes certain restrictions imposed on young girls in Christian society: "Never go with a man alone/Never alone/and even if you're engaged/only passionless kisses" (SP 39).

Like Meena Alexander, de Souza shows a sense of alienation and a struggle for identity in most of her poetical outpourings that reflect the poet's search for identity lost somewhere in the muddle of race, culture, nationality, language, colour, sex and gender.

- **Dr. Mithilesh K. Pandey** is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

**DIASPORIC STRAIN IN
AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE HUNGRY TIDE***

Anurag Bihari

Amitav Ghosh's fictive art is characterised by an exceptional capacity for founding fiction on fact. In an interview conducted by *The Hindustan Times*, Ghosh states, "Researching a place or people or a history is very useful for me as a writer. It lets me incorporate a lot of elements into my storytelling. Some writers can write without resorting to facts. To be honest, I am not one of them." His not being "one of them" is what differentiates and distinguishes him from other fiction writers. When one relates his academic career to his career as a writer, it is easy to see how all his six novels, written so far, have one common thread running through them that lends them all an unmistakable esthetic identity. What accounts for the authenticity of his art is actually driven by the desire to take a close look at life and come out with a picture of man as a creature of conditions and forces not always within his control or comprehension. He is indeed a writer of human situations par excellence and one aspect of his literary genius as an activist is his unique treatment of history. With a B.A. (Hons.) in History, an M.A. in Sociology and a D.Phil. in Social Anthropology, he is eminently equipped to write the way he does. A writer of postmodern fiction, his stories travel through the frontiers of time and space creating an account that has a symmetrical flow.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh shuttles between the Morichjhapi incident from Nirmal's point of view and the present day travels and travails of Piyali Roy, Kanai Dutt and Fokir Mondal. These travels are vital to the story and lay the foundation for an intricate network of subtopics and plots. As in his other novels, in *The Hungry Tide*, too, his writing follows scrupulous research that makes for a mixture of fiction and fact to such an extent that they stand undifferentiated, touching upon various topics from the homeless wanderings of refugees, the burning issues of freedom and war to the variety and vagaries of life – both human and wild – in the Sundarbans, the question of communication without verbal language, socio-economic issues of development, the squalor of trafficking in flesh and so on and so forth.

- **Anurag Bihari** is Research Scholar in the Department of English at Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University (TMBU), Bhagalpur (Bihar).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

INNER FIBRES OF HUMAN EMOTIONS IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

Deepali Sharma

From time immemorial, Indian women, the embodiment of love and affection, hope and patience, have been showing their worth in each and every discipline of knowledge. Many skilful women of letters have contributed to sustain the true spirit of Indian fiction in English. In recent years women have learnt to articulate with greater confidence what had been suppressed and camouflaged for long. However, it has taken them almost half a century to find footage in terms of national and International recognition for their works which are in no way inferior to that of their male counterparts.

An indelible impact among Indian woman novelists in English has been left by Arundhati Roy. She is the first native Indian citizen to receive the prestigious Booker Prize for her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*. This novel flicked her to international fame and made a tremendous sale globally. There are about forty different languages into which this book has been translated.

The vision of Roy is essentially tragic. Every man and every woman in the novel has his or her own mode of judgement, riddled with ignorance, superstition and genderized views. In all relationships, love, acceptance, response, yielding or withdrawal, frigidity, aversion, self-hatred and emotional backgrounds are very important. Childhood experiences and memories go a long way towards moulding life, attitude and personal relationships. Children, when they are small and innocent, are taught by parents to despise the untouchables and are warned not to be familiar or mix with them without even thinking about their emotions. But children naturally go where they receive love and affection without being aware of the colour, creed or cast distinctions which are highlighted in the case of Estha, Rahel and Sophie Mol who go to the hut of Velutha and play with him. Love has its own language and the love and affection these children get from Velutha is everything for them. Here, Roy clearly shows that love is the only factor that prevents everyone from falling apart.

- **Dr. Deepali Sharma** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

POLITICS OF GENDER IN SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDIES

Meera Mohanty

Women in Shakespearean Comedy have drawn a lot of critical attention since Elizabethan days and volumes have been written on different aspects of the comedy heroines: their glory and glamour, their sparkling and vivacious wit, their catholicity and wider understanding, more so their greater participation in the celebration of life and the world. It is customarily believed that the heroes dwarf into insignificance before the towering personality of these women which led to the oft-quoted statement that Shakespearean comedies have no heroes but only heroines. They have been studied adequately from the viewpoints of historicity, culture and context and Elizabethan world order; in such a vast canvas of critical literature, the present paper makes an attempt to study them from a new perspective, making them a part of a conventional order of the Elizabethan society, not domineering and dashing but being dominated and dictated by the male-dominated society.

Renaissance ushered in a new awakening and an attitudinal transformation to life, yet it was a period of transition. The authority of the old system was changing, a new system was not fully established yet, and society was trying to cope with an amalgam of contradictory ideas. The ideal to which a woman of that period was to aspire was of an obedient, modest, chaste, silent and passive creature never forgetting her subordination to men, especially her father and husband. Women in Shakespeare's comedies, however, seem to be emancipated and admired for their wit, self-confidence and self-reliance. In Shakespeare's comedies we find different heroines were nearly everything a woman should not be in the Elizabethan Age: dynamic, active both physically and verbally, assertive, independent.

In a reading of Shakespeare's major comedies we witness some women in Shakespearean comedy are strong and independent while others are completely submissive. It seems that the behavior of either seems to be influenced more by theme or plot than by any qualities within the characters themselves.

- **Dr. Meera Mohanty** is Lecturer in English at K.D.S. Women's College, Darakhapatna, Cuttack (Orissa).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

NAXALISM: SOME INSIGHTS

Kamlakar K. Askar

The Indian State has been grappling with the issue of Naxalism for more than last six decades. Naxalism is basically a legacy of colonial era and now it has scaled new heights in the postcolonial Indian state. All the so-called measures undertaken by the government to eradicate the threat of Naxalism have virtually failed. The purpose of this paper is not to probe into the historical background of the issue but rather to offer insight into the problem of Naxalism in the present national scenario.

A round-table conference on Naxalism was organized by the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi in collaboration with the Department of Sociology, Nagpur University on 18 September, 2010. The conference was attended by scholars from politics, law, academics, Indian administrative services, Indian police service, journalism, youths and students especially from the Naxal affected areas, human rights activists, sociopolitical and economic thinkers. In this conference, the speakers expressed their views on Naxalism from all possible perspectives. The diverse views expressed over there were for and against Naxalism in addition to some neutral stands.

Some said Naxalism is a relevant political ideology which needs to be understood sympathetically, tracing its genesis to the backwardness of the tribal communities which are victims of socioeconomic injustice and disparity caused by post-independence imbalanced development. Some held that Naxalites are organized criminal gangs which need to be treated with force as a problem of law and order. Some tried to find out the roots of Naxalism in the given socioeconomic and political development or deterioration in post-independence India. Some tried to establish that Naxalites have deviated from their avowed political ideology of socialism, aspiring for political power through violence. Some accentuated the positive aspect of Naxalism seen in hinterlands, whereas some condemned its methods of corruption, cruelty and violence.

- **Dr. Kamlakar K. Askar** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Dhanwate National College, Nagpur.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

MUDDLE AND MYSTERY IN FORSTER'S *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

Chandra Prabha

Since the publication of *A Passage to India* in 1922, many writers and critics have expressed their views that E.M. Forster's final novel examines issues of representation in a characteristically modernist fashion. The arguments by the critics unfold the assumption that in order to present a political critique of British colonialism, Forster must present Indian characters as subject to an untroubled mimesis. The portrayal of difference between English and Indians in the novel cannot be understood as either ontological or political. Forster's portrayal of difference avoids such binaries by presenting national, cultural and racial identity in ideological terms. The novel creates an atmosphere of mystery by contrasting Indian culture with Western culture within the novel. It creates a good deal of confusion for a reader unfamiliar with Indian society even though it remains a commendable piece of work in portrayal of subtle mystery.

Forster in *A Passage to India* mystifies India on many occasions. The two Englishwomen Mrs Moore and Adela Quested come to see the "real India" (25). Forster presents the Marabar hills as "rising abruptly, insanely, and kept without proportion" (123). The Marabar caves are presented as more mysterious than they usually are. The caves are shown as symbols of evil and extreme negation, separating India from the rest of mankind. What Mrs Moore and Adela experience in the caves are horrifying and frustrating. The connotation of mystery in the novel is an attribute of cultural difference, an attribute, which if positioned along a vertical hierarchical scale of privilege and performance, may be called fallacious. In the case of Adela, "the echo flourished, ranging up and down like a nerve in the faculty of her hearing, and the noise in the cave, so unimportant, intellectually was prolonged over the surface of her life" (190). Adela accuses Dr. Aziz for trying to assault her but later on she admits in the court that Aziz is innocent. The circumstances around Adela seem to be unconvincing. It seems to be the result of Adela's hallucination.

- **Dr. Chandra Prabha** is an independent researcher and freelancer based in Patna.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMINIST DRAMA

Tanuja Mathur

In this postmodern era, the concept of minority literature has become a vast intellectual and cultural movement. It encompasses the conflicts of every dispossessed class. The movement of Black authorship also belongs to this literary tradition of emotional and intellectual expression. Black authorship which is a substream of American mainstream writing has a universal appeal since it is a protest against the negation of human dignity. All artistic forms invariably derive from or contribute to the physical, intellectual and spiritual content of an individual. To a certain extent, form transcends its existence of structure and attains the function of creation. Political realities are addressed as well as created by art. Black theatre is one such art form that shaped a change through its diverse elements.

World War II came to an end in 1945 bringing a lot of change in the world scenario and in the United States. In 1957, the Civil Rights Act was passed. The Black Consciousness Movement of the late 1960s and early 70s sensitised some members of the White Theatre audience to drama by and about Blacks. There was an increase in Black Theatre audiences. The Black Theatre Movement was a populist movement under the influence of which, rather than black protest and revolt, an evocation of the Black consciousness was sought for. The new theatre in the U.S. saw the emergence of many significant women playwrights who used theatre in non-conventional ways and spaces. There was a shift to new experimental form and content that emphasized the idiom "personal is political." Feminist drama projected the experiences of the silenced and the marginalized women, celebrating their community and expressing the moral concerns arising from their experience.

Alice Childress and Lorraine Hansberry were the pioneers of Black Women drama of this period. Their plays exhibit the multiplicity and courage of American women. Although both had different origins, yet some common characteristics are discernible in their writings. The Black Theatre Movement of the sixties, thus, emerged as the African American artists' venue for re-visioning and re-constructing their community's history, culture and art, developing a black aesthetics apart from Western parameters.

- **Dr. Tanuja Mathur** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

FAR FROM THE MADDING WORLD: MAYA IN ANITA DESAI'S *CRY, THE PEACOCK*

Arvind M. Nawale

Anita Desai accomplishes what many writers attempt but fail to achieve. Her novels bring out dilemma, tension, agony, frustration, isolation, alienation, silent miseries and defenselessness of her women protagonists. Her novels are like a journey into an obscure psyche. She drives deep into the inner recesses of human psyche and explores its pathos and plight. It appears as if she deliberately lays down a style which is most appropriate for such themes. She never writes the kind of social document that demands the creation of realistic and typical characters and the use of realistic and typical dialogue. The process of her character construction includes a soul-searching self-exploration, a struggle for realization and an exposure to agony. Her characters have exceptional abilities but are constantly disturbed by silent miseries and defenselessness in their family or social life and long for an escape from the madding world. As a result they experience discomfort and suffer silently.

All the female protagonists of Anita Desai have definite qualities in common. They are all modern females who have grown up reading fairy tales. They knit a net of dreamy, silky threads around them. Deep down in their hearts they believe that their story will have a happy ending. When the winds of education, of reality and exposure begin to rock their shelter, she desperately arms herself to meet head-on the demons. The demons trouble her and in spite of all her learning and exposure, demand from her an unswerving commitment to an ideal womanhood forged through centuries of patriarchal impositions. The females are thus poised between two worlds – one that provides them with immense comfort which they cannot reject and the other which they cannot easily accept. This leads to the longing for an escape from the madding world.

In her first novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), the protagonist Maya suffers silently due to miseries in her family life. We see Maya in the role of a daughter and wife prominently. In her father's house she is brought up in a fairy world.

- **Dr. Arvind M. Nawale** is Head, Department of English, Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, Udgir, Latur (Maharashtra).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THAT LONG SILENCE*

Savita Rani

Shashi Deshpande is one of the foremost Indian novelists known for writing in the strain of existentialism. However, while critics find this strain in her novels, beginning with *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, they take a general view of existentialism in her female protagonists. The present paper addresses itself to one of her much discussed female protagonist Jaya in *That Long Silence* from the point of view of existential humanism of Jean-Paul Sartre.

What Jean-Paul Sartre means by existentialism in his lecture, "Existentialism and Humanism" (1948), is a doctrine that renders human life possible and affirms that "every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity" (Sartre 24-25). That is what Jaya's last words attest: "It's possible that we may not change even over long period of time. But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything known now it is this: life has always to be made possible" (TLS 193).

Deshpande seems to forestall objections against holding that her heroines do not change, implying that they turn naturalistic i.e. we find them conditioned. Jaya agrees with Mukta that people do not change; at least they do not change overnight. She speculates over the possible change in her husband and consequently their relationship. She hopes because she feels life would be impossible otherwise. Jaya, like Saru, may not sound heroic. They may appear like the people in the novels of Zola. Readers of the novel may throw away the novel in desperation, a novel sick at heart and burdened with a sad wisdom, as Sartre would say. "Sadness" is akin to bourgeois maxims as "Charity begins at home" or "Promote a rogue and he'll sue you for damage, knock him down and he'll do you homage?" (Sartre 25). For Deshpande there is nothing sad about Jaya's admission. There is nothing gloomy in the end of the novel. Like Sartre in "Existentialism and Humanism," she would say that her readers are not so much perturbed over her pessimism as much over her optimism.

- **Savita Rani** is Research Scholar in the Department of English at Maharishi Markandeshwar University, Mullana, Ambala.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

THE POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO: A NOTE

Kuldeep K. Mohadikar

Eyebrows have been raised against Sri Aurobindo as a poet. It is interesting to note what appeared in *Times Literary Supplement* shortly after *Savitri* was published: "It cannot be said that Aurobindo shows any organic adaptation to music and melody. His thoughts are profound, his technical devices commendable, but the music that enchants or disturbs is not there. Aurobindo is not another Tagore, or Iqbal or even Sarojini Naidu" (qtd. in Sethna 103).

It is asked whether Aurobindo is a yogi or a poet first. Chronologically and from his own testimony, he is first and foremost a poet; as a poet he is a pure poet, although some critics may not agree with such a generalization. Some Western critics have failed to see the divine music of his poetry. Aurobindo is a great poet, a poet's poet, poet of the present and the future, a poet of man, of nature and of divine together. His writings, literary and non-literary, planned and incidental, prose and poetry all put together constitute indeed a contribution to culture and knowledge seldom paralleled in history in vastness of scope or in sheer amount, in variety of modes or forms attempted.

As a lyric poet Aurobindo's range is expansive, covering a period of sixty years. Juvenilia, songs, sonnets, philosophical poems, mystic affirmations, mantric emanations, experiments of quantitative and stress metres, even poems with a humorous or political slant – there is little doubt regarding the variety, richness and cumulative impressiveness of his achievement. Apart from his great epics, his metrical experiments have now become classics in not only Indian writing in English but also in the realm of world literature.

Aurobindo was a perfect master of short poems. His short poems have literary beauty with poetic aestheticism and rapturous ecstasy. He has composed large number of short poems, lyrics and sonnets with emotional as well as intellectual fervor. His first collection of short poems appeared in 1895 under the title "Songs of Myrtilla." In this collection, the lyric range is supreme and noteworthy. He attempts to present the common as uncommon and the ordinary as mystic.

- **Dr. Kuldeep K. Mohadikar** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Shri Shivaji Arts and Commerce College, Amravati (Maharashtra).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

Prabha Pant

Language exerts hidden power, like the moon on tides.

- Rita Mae Brown

Language is a man-made device. It is used as a tool for communication at all levels of human life: family, institution and community. It is difficult to envisage a life without language. Sign, mime or words – all are constituents of language. It is the medium used to convey thoughts and emotions. Language impacts us deeply. It is not very farfetched to say that all actions and reactions are a kind of interface with language. As Shakespeare remarked, words without thoughts “never to heaven go.”

Language, thus, has the power to give expression to great thoughts. This is precisely why language can be a potent tool for empowerment and personal transformation. The wonderful power of language enables us develop a strong sense of purpose which assists in achieving excellence in material, intellectual and spiritual aspects of life. Language has the power to inform so that we will be understood and known. The power of language is the power of articulate speech that captures the intensity of both thoughts and feelings. Language is not only the vehicle of thought, it is also a great and efficient instrument in stimulating the thinking process. In the words of Abdul Baha, the appointed successor of Baha'ullah of the Bahai: “the function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of the human heart. The heart is like a box and language is the key. Only by using the key can we open the box and observe the gems it contains.” Therefore, it is crucial to bring forth these mysteries and secrets of the human heart through the power of language.

Given the immense power of language, it is easy to understand its significance as an empowering agent. Ability and power are listed as synonyms for empowerment in the thesaurus. Ability is defined as the possession of the qualities, especially mental quality, required to do something or get something done. Another facet of empowerment is to develop a sense of belonging, a sense of community.

- **Dr. Prabha Pant** is Reader in English at SRT Campus, H.N.B. Garhwal University, Badshahi Thaul (Tehri Garhwal).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

Short Story

THE GIVER

Anil Z. Mathew

The Guptas became a happier family after an incident in the recent past. And it is to be noted, dear reader, that soon after the incident occurred, the family atmosphere in the home improved considerably. They began to say grace before meals as sincerely as possible. Rajeev, the younger son, got more responsibilities now than before. His elder brother, Soham, relating from his own experience, helped Rajeev in fulfilling his new responsibilities. As a result of the incident, the Guptas also began to be more honest and transparent as family members. They would relate the activities of the day to each other, usually over dinner. Mr. Gupta made it a point to have at least, since the incident, one meal together as a family. Dinner seemed the most convenient, since right after waking up in the morning they had to go about their own scheduled activities for the day. Yes, as I said before, I must indeed say it again, that after the incident they became a much happier family.

The two boys were both at a crucial juncture in their academic lives. They were going to face their Board exams. There was much stress in the family because of this. Both parents were working, the father at an NGO working on projects committed to the eradication of child labour, and the mother employed as a clerk at the Central Government Press. Soham, who was sixteen, was in his XII Std., while Rajeev, two years younger, was in his Xth. They both attended Vishwa Bandhu High School and Junior college. Since both were going to face their Board exams...the anxiety about the future was apparent, as the family members hurried about pursuing their hectic schedules for the day. Their father had made up his mind to send both the children for professional courses. Soham would pursue Engineering studies, preferably in an IIT, and Rajeev, of course, would take up a career in Medicine. The children felt the burden of their father's decisions regarding their future careers since Soham wanted to pursue a career in Travel and Tourism and Rajeev was keen on specializing in Environmental Science.

Denied their natural inclinations in the choice of a career, the two children were becoming quite quarrelsome and rebellious. Their mother, Mrs. Gupta, was seriously concerned about her family and, since she was a God-fearing Christian with a steadfast faith in the

Lord, she would often go to church alone, unaccompanied by her husband and sons. Even when she diligently went about her duties at the Government Press, she had learnt the art of praying in her spirit; she made it a point during the lunch-break to spend a few minutes reading her pocket-sized *Bible* which her sister had gifted to her.

She also made it a point to tell her pastor to pray for her family. She told him how her children were becoming rebellious and that her husband often came home late, heavily drunk. She told him how he would shout at Soham and Rajeev for apparently no reason at all and the boys in turn would quarrel with each other to release their pent-up emotions and so in the boys' hearts a certain seed of resentment against their father gradually began to take root. Their mother tried to convince her husband to change his mind about his choice regarding their children's careers, but he just refused to listen. She realized that only her faith in God would help him change his mind. Yes, only God could help them; so, in spite of circumstances, she persevered in her prayers for her family.

Coming back to the incident I'd referred to, which as I said, transformed the atmosphere at home, well, here is how it all happened. When she came home from work one evening, Mrs. Gupta found the front door half open, and as her curiosity mounted, her apprehensions about a possible intruder in the house were laid to rest when she surveyed the scene in the drawing room, which as usual was in a mess with clothes lying scattered and piled on the floor, something she was getting used to seeing nowadays. The desktop PC was still on, and CDs carelessly strewn across the computer table. Nothing unusual she told herself, quite reconciled with the indifferent couldn't-care-less attitude of her family.

She could hear her husband's angrily raised voice coming from their bedroom. She stealthily went into the boys' room to avoid what she thought must be a replay of what had now become a familiar scene. She peered through the doorway of the boys' room into the master bedroom where the commotion seemed to be coming from. She watched quietly hidden from view.

She hadn't, of course, known anything until after the incident, of what had happened to Mr. Gupta that day; what triggered off the whole incident in fact and why he had come home early.

Mr. Gupta was regularly arriving late for work at his office which was situated a kilometre away from his house. He worked in the NGO as a Personal Assistant to the CEO, Mr. Pritam, a no-nonsense boss and a

stickler for punctuality and hard work. Gupta's performance at work was also rather poor. After several warnings from Mr. Pritam for his irregularity and careless attitude towards his job, he got his first written memorandum from his boss.

Mr. Gupta, infuriated at being asked by his boss to give him a written explanation for his conduct, had reached the limits of his patience and good sense. His boss told him to take the rest of the day off to reflect on his general negligence towards his work. And he added that if he didn't change his attitude, Mr. Pritam would have to consider terminating his services.

Mr. Gupta could feel in his bones a surge of anger that refused to die down. That day he walked away from his office, even forgetting his way to the bar he regularly went to before he went home. He was looking for an outlet for his frustration and anger.

When he got home, he could hear the sound of footsteps in his bedroom. He rushed into the bedroom and to his utter surprise he saw Soham hastily dropping something on the floor. It was the purse in which he kept the budgeted amount of money for meeting monthly household expenses.

Mr. Gupta shouted at his son in anger and it was at that point Mrs. Gupta came in. She saw Soham looking guiltily at his father and her husband stoop and pick up the purse and count the money. Her husband exclaimed that there was 30 rupees missing. Soham was really terrified as he saw the rage erupt on his father's face. Mrs. Gupta witnessed the whole incident from the doorway of the boys' room.

Soham, panic-stricken blurted out, "Dad...Dad...please!...I'm sorry! I really am!!!"

Mr. Gupta struck his son so hard on the face that Soham lost his balance and fell over. As he began to rise unsteadily to his feet and, before he could recover, he slapped his son violently across the face repeatedly...in fact exactly seven times and then Soham did something his father thought was unpardonable. His resentment now so strongly evident, Soham struck his father back across his face. Mr. Gupta was stunned and stared at his son in utter disbelief.

The boy was so shocked at his own reaction that he covered his face and wept uncontrollably, tears streaming down his face in shame and remorse. Strangely the boy witnessed something even more unbelievable happening to Mr. Gupta who felt as if something was dying within him. He too began to weep like a little child. Soham trembling with guilt

wailed in despair, "Dad...I'm...what's happened to me? I don't know why I did this? I'm sorry dad. Oh God! I'm...what's happening to your face...why, you're smiling...but why are you...smiling? Have you gone crazy or something?" His dad's smile...broadened across his tear-stained face.

Then his father did something even more amazing. He opened his purse and extracted two hundred-rupee notes and a ten-rupee one and said to Soham, "Son, this is a gift to you. A gift from God." Soham looked flabbergasted...utterly mystified. "Dad, are you mad or something? Why...this is crazy...really crazy. I mean I don't understand? I don't deserve this. Oh God! I don't deserve this!" His father sighed and replied,

"Neither did I, my son. Neither did I!"

"But," said his son, absolutely clueless, "what do you mean Dad?" he was bewildered! His father, gradually regaining his composure, explained:

"Well, son, you know I'm the youngest of three children. After my two older sisters were born, there had been an interval of almost fourteen years. You can imagine how my mother felt. She wanted to please her husband thinking a son would restore her image in the eyes of her husband...after two daughters. In fact, you see quite naturally, I became my mother's favourite, much pampered by her. But, then, it hardly affected my father. I was certainly not pampered by my father who brought us all up with strict discipline. He treated us the same. Well...well, to cut a long story short, one day, my father caught me stealing three rupees from his cash drawer. And just like with you...he got so angry...he hit me with his cane several times...exactly *seven* times.

"I was so enraged with my father that I did what you just did. I struck him across his face with my hand! I felt so ashamed of myself for doing that. I couldn't believe what I'd done. He was so shocked. After a while his anger slowly dissipated and his face lit up with a smile and then...guess what? He took exactly twentyone rupees out of his drawer and looking at me, said,

"Take it...take it, son,' he said...'this is for you. Do with it what you want. Only spend it wisely.' "I was as shocked as you were and couldn't believe my eyes." 'But why? Dad why...?' I exclaimed to him!"

Mr. Gupta had a twinkle in his eyes...as he recalled. "This is a gift from God to you. Take it son...take it" he had said.

Soham, as he heard this, was aware of something slowly...something slowly dying...in him.

He did feel a little puzzled, though.

“But then Dad, why did you give me Two hundred rupees?”

“Well, guess why, son? Son, you were always good at maths...that’s all the hint I can give you. You can ask your mother why? Maybe she could give you a clue.”

Meanwhile, Mrs. Gupta, who had been watching closely, emerged from the doorway of the boys’ room and walked towards them. Both Soham and his father, surprised to see her, and realizing that she had witnessed the whole scene, looked rather sheepish now. Soham’s mother with a mischievous look in her eyes, remarked,

“Well...like your father said. Soham, you’ve always been good at maths...Soham, I’m sure you can figure it out.” She added as an afterthought, “Now, all I’ve got to say is...do you two men know how much I paid for a kg of onions yesterday?”

Both father and son with sheepish grins on their faces walked away together. When they had left the room Mrs. Gupta knew that her prayers had been answered. Next Sunday, the congregation was surprised to see the Guptas worshipping in church together as a family.

- **Dr. Anil Z. Mathew** is Head, Department of English, Hislop College, Nagpur.



REVIEW ESSAY

WHERE ARE THE TAGORE'S OF TODAY?

Jonah Raskin

In her essay about Tagore's plays, *Red Oleanders* and *Sacrifice*, Arpita Ghosh reveals her own sympathies for the author from the start. "We all fall short of words and expressions when we try to describe him," she writes. Near the end of her opening paragraph, she adds, "Tagore has been a part of my growing up but I had never dreamt a day would come in my life when I have the privilege to write something on this great luminary" (167). Ghosh is one of the thirty contributors to *Rabindranath Tagore: The Living Presence*, which is edited by Nibir K. Ghosh who is also the editor of *Re-Markings*, a publication to which I have contributed essays for years. I am not an Indian, as some readers may already know, and have never been to India, but I am envious of the thirty or so writers included in this volume.

Yes, we Americans (in the United States) have our Henry David Thoreau, our Ralph Waldo Emerson, and our Walt Whitman – all of them spiritually minded, and profoundly connected to nature and the cosmos. But we don't have a Tagore (1861-1941) or anyone like him. We have no one who created as many different kinds of literature as Tagore, no one who was as beloved as he was for as long, and no one who was and still is, as he was, a kind of secular saint. Not surprisingly, Tagore inspires a writer to rise to new, higher level of consciousness and expression. It is no wonder that words and expressions fall short in describing his genius. Tagore is Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau all rolled up in one. He's his own man, too— one of a kind, inimitable and irreplaceable. To put it another way, Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau just begin to suggest the immense influence, the dynamic creativity, and the "living presence," as Nibir Ghosh calls it, of Tagore.

That, of course, is because the United States is not India and probably could never give birth to and nurture a writer such as Tagore, who grew up in affluence and who was profoundly altered by his experience with peasants in rural villages more than a hundred years ago. Compared with modern India, which didn't come into existence until 1947, the United States is an old nation that long ago lost any innocence it might have had on the slave ships bound from Africa, and

in the wars to exterminate the misnamed “American Indians.” Unlike India, the United States became an Empire almost immediately after it declared its independence from the British. As many of the essays in this book make clear, Tagore grew up and acquired his wisdom in a colonized country, and, without taking part directly in the political struggle for independence, he expressed a passion for independence, freedom, and dignity for everyone in just about everything that he wrote. As Namrata Parmar points out, Sir Tagore, as the British dubbed him, rejected his knighthood after British troops massacred 400 Indians at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919. He knew where his loyalties lay and didn’t hesitate to show them.

The collection brings to the fore Tagore’s all-embracing spirit and his sense of inclusivity that sought the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight rather than in the asceticism of renunciation. In his erudite introduction Nibir Ghosh rightly states: “Though an Indian by birth, Tagore was a world citizen by his perception. He saw India as the pilgrimage of world humanity, as the great synthesizer and unifier in the midst of manifold differences through centuries. He refused to confine himself to narrow definitions of nationalism and strove to remain far above the narrow confines of the nation-state debate that seems to flourish in the academia today. If he desired to share India’s message of cultural synthesis with the rest of the world, he also ascertained the need for India to incorporate others’ messages into her own cultural repertoire” (7).

Given the sheer number of authors, and the focus of the essays, there is bound to be repetition. Some of the same basic information about Tagore’s life appears again and again. Discussions of his “humanism” come up repeatedly. Indeed, Tagore’s “humanism” seems to be the single most important theme that runs throughout the book; five essays have the words “humanist,” “humanism,” or “humanizing” in the titles. The repetition isn’t necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it’s effective in that it impresses key information on the reader, and makes it hard to forget. Of course, not everyone who writes about Tagore’s humanism says exactly the same thing. Not everyone who writes about his plays and poems says the same thing either. Diversity is the keynote here.

The contributors bring Freud, feminism, Orientalism, postcolonialism, the Upanishads, William Butler Yeats, Mahatma Gandhi, and more to Tagore’s work. What’s more there are ample quotations from Tagore’s plays, poems, and essays throughout the volume. A reader gets to

hear Tagore in his own words, such as: “I am none of the wheels of power but I am one with the living creatures that are crushed by it,” a sentiment that just never grows old and stale and that bears repeating.

I also like what Tagore said after he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913: “no literary work can have its quality or appeal enhanced by the Nobel Prize.” That comment also bears repeating, understanding, and appreciating in our contemporary era of prizes, prizes, and more prizes that are often as much about selling books as they are about the merits of a work.

Reading the essays in this book makes me want to say, “where are the Tagore’s of today?” and “How can we best carry on his legacy?” Publication of this book is an excellent first step. Hopefully all of the contributors will introduce Tagore’s life and his work to members of younger generations, whether they have cell phones or not, live in villages or not, read books or are illiterate. After all, doesn’t Tagore have something of value to say to everyone today about love, and friendship, and beauty.

WORK CITED

Ghosh, Nibir K. ed. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Living Presence*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2011. 311 pp. Rs. 850.

- **Professor Jonah Raskin** is Chair of the Communication Studies Department at Sonoma State University, California, U.S.A. A frequent contributor to *Re-Markings*, he is the author of 14 books, including literary criticism, reporting, memoir, and biography.



“I LOVE TO TALK OF DARKNESS”

Patricia Prime

Shadows of the Real is K.K. Srivastava’s third volume of poetry. The book includes a lengthy Preface by the poet called “Poetry: I love to talk of darkness.” Here he writes: “Writing poems is a way to survive. Poets feel deeply and those who feel deeply need to survive too. Through life’s thorny thickets one searches for a royal road at the end of which one meets a resting place: a fuzzily defined amalgamation of perception, cognition and analysis.” The poems in this volume seek to do just that; the poet works through his emotions to reveal the layers beneath that provide an insight to his thoughts, feelings and attitudes.

In this collection, Srivastava investigates signs and portents, the elusiveness of divine providence and the fickleness of human life. In the first, lengthy poem, "Our Being Us," his investigation is a literal and spiritual quest for the roots of what we are seeking in life. As the poet says: "The world/fascinates us, perturbs us/quizzes us, mystifies us;" and I would argue that this poem is the highlight of the collection. There is a beautiful layering and metaphoric blending of seemingly different realms of experience that reveal an organic unity eluding the casual reader of landscapes and poetry.

For an explicit reference to the concept of stubborn wisdom, "Between Night and Morning" reveals itself as a source of perception for the poet. In another lengthy poem, "Time's Emptiness," the speaker examines the futile search for the source of life. This source can neither be reached nor named. Yet, at this particular moment of failure a greater truth reveals itself: that life is a game to be played out until the bitter end. There is neither beginning nor end. Understanding is, first and foremost, going back and forth and around in circles of time, experience and eternal renewal. It is a painful process of learning the principles on which civilization is founded. It allows the speaker to bring experience under control and to cautiously reflect on the "Absurdities/of time."

"Sins" and "Mental Asylum and Poetry" are seemingly mutually exclusive activities. In the speaker's opinion, "night replete with aromas/frees me of all my sins" ("Sins") and "In facing life/one faces death too." ("Mental Asylum and Poetry"). Though there is no security as "Diverse voices percolate/leaving/unsettled identities" ("Nothing Left To Tell"), there are anchors, marks on landscapes and people that endure as reminders, as objects imbued with significance. It is the quest for these tokens of permanence that provide guidance for the poet by their living or emotional energy. The poet wavers between contemplation and action; his self-imposed limitations frighten him as much as their perseverance and resourcefulness inspire him. "Contemplation," for example, marks a reconciliatory comfort: "Idle questions' wretchedness/fulfills his moments; his joys, his sorrows –/ Inconsequential ones/Representing elegiac pathos of/his contemplation;/He feels like contemplating/It hiccups."

In "Decisions," Srivastava deals with the "Hopeless convolutions/ idiotic silence" in which people are immersed, unable to make the right choices or to make sense of the world. "Success" is an impressive achievement; the poem tackles the "questions" that "make no sense."

This theme has an overpowering presence in the poet's mind. "Sealed Remembrance" relates the experience of the speaker's spiritual and actual memories. We are alone in this world, he says, searching for the colourful life that will bring some ease: "My eyes have learnt a difficult lesson/shun other eyes in the night,/in the dimmed rays,/on the light-laddered waves/You travel alone in that intense form/welcomed by caged alienation." "Depression" presents the poet's own "darkness" which continues to haunt him. In the lengthy poem, "Human Illusions," Srivastava extends his investigation into the relationship between what is real and what can only be imagined.

In this collection the poet achieves one of the phenomena of the poetry written *in extremis*, that is the phenomenon relating to producing some images tainted with bitter protest at the "darkness" which accompanies his everyday life. This "darkness" can be attributed to the absenteeism practiced by the world against the self, whether this world is a country torn by the realities and anxieties of life, or the person that is tearing out the concept of belonging and depriving the self of the bond of identity. The final poem, "Nietzsche's Poet," which is in three parts, begins: "Early morning hours,/radiant hours/And in those radiant hours/strolls the crowd,/non-believers; no God for/they think without God/they move." Srivastava strongly demonstrates his perceptions of life in the final lines of this poem: "Later, curious crowd finds him/declaring the places God is harboured/as the graveyard of the poor; the poet/has been buried there/because of us – we murderers of all/murderers."

With a language that is charged with the symbols of sadness and with images that call for the values of life to overcome disappointment, this book is a rich addition to Srivastava's achievements.

WORK CITED

Srivastava, K.K. *Shadows of the Real*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2012. 136 pp. Rs. 195.

- **Patricia Prime** is co-editor of the New Zealand haiku magazine *Kokako* and reviews editor of *Stylus* and *Takahe*. She has had several of her interviews published in *Takahe* and online in *Simply Haiku* and *Stylus*. Her poetry, reviews, essays and interviews have been published worldwide.



RE-MARKINGS

www.re-markings.com

The difference
between
a democracy
and a
dictatorship
is that
in a democracy
you vote first
and take orders later;
in a dictatorship
you don't have to
waste your time
voting.

- Charles Bukowski

ISSN 0972-611X