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Sharan Kumar Limbale

Tenzin Tsundue

Haruki Murakami

Yasunari Kawabata

Arun Kolatkar

Rassundari Devi

George Eliot

Anita Desai

Bama

Githa Hariharan

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Narendra Modi

Tijan Sallah

Ecological Concerns

Fiction and History

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EDITORIAL

I had the opportunity of meeting the legendary Khushwant Singh, at the “Leslie Sawhney Programme of Training in Democracy” held at Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra in the late 1970s. The meeting, though brief, remains deeply entrenched in my memory for it made me realize that wit and humor were not mere tools of expression but the very ingredient of his life and personality. Any avid reader accustomed to reading his regular weekly column “With Malice Towards One and All” is bound to miss his inimitable presence. Penned in his unique flamboyant style that set at naught all hypocritical traditions and limitations, his spontaneously overflowing renderings created a canon which only he was capable of creating. Intensely aware of the value of humor in life, he remarked without any inhibition: “We Indians are singularly humorless people who find it difficult to laugh unless it is prescribed by a doctor and administered as a dose good for our health...We may not have much humor in ourselves but we enjoy it coming from others. A good joke is a tonic for appetites jaded by an unending and unsavory diet of politics, corruption, religious and social problems...” The music of laughter that his jokes evoked are bound to remain with us as we bid adieu to the Emperor of Wit and Humor who, until his very last, entertained and enlightened us with his musings.



One day in Barcelona, my wife and I were asleep and the doorbell rings. I open the door and a man says to me, “I came to fix the ironing cord.” My wife, from the bed, says, “We don’t have anything wrong with the iron here.” The man asks, “Is this apartment two?” “No,” I say, “upstairs.” Later, my wife went to the iron and plugged it in and it burned up. This was a reversal. The man came before we knew it had to be fixed. This type of thing happens all the time. My wife has already forgotten it. – Gabriel García Márquez (The Atlantic, April 17, 2014).

Though the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges is usually credited to be the first successful author to use the genre of “magical realism” effectively, it was largely Gabriel García Márquez who demonstrated with remarkable ease the art of integrating elements of fantasy into realistic settings of day-to-day events through his monumental works, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Comprehending the simple fact that “What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it,” Marquez set the scene for a whole new generation of writers like

Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Ben Okri, Louis de Bernieres, Toni Morrison and many others to understand and portray real experiences through perspectives created by magical elements in varying cultures and climes. The best tribute that one can think of in honour of Marquez can be summed up in his own words: "Don't cry because it came to an end, smile because it happened."



To those of us who are familiar with the power and the glory of African American writings, the name of Maya Angelou needs no introduction. With the publication of her acclaimed memoir *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in 1967, she decisively expanded the range and vision of what was hitherto considered the prerogative of the male triangle of influence – Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin. She dedicated this famous autobiography to her son, Guy Johnson and "all the strong/ black birds of promise/ who defy the odds and gods/ and sing their song." Inspired by the impact the book created during the peak of the Civil Rights Movement in America, the legendary James Baldwin wrote, "I have no words for this achievement, but I know that not since the days of my childhood, when the people in books were more real than the people one saw every day, have I found myself so moved." On the death of Maya Angelou, Barack Obama hailed the "Global Renaissance Woman" as "one of the brightest lights of our time – a brilliant writer, a fierce friend and a truly phenomenal woman." Undeterred by the experiences of racial brutality, Angelou created beautiful lyrics embodying her unshakable faith in eternal human values as is evident from her own words: "A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song." As a poet-activist she affirmed that her mission in life was not merely to survive, but to "thrive with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."



In committing ourselves to celebrate the life and work of these legends, who embarked on their eternal journey during the last few months, we may draw both solace and inspiration from the concluding lines of Maya Angelou's lyric "When Great Trees Fall": "when great souls die,/ after a period peace blooms,/ slowly and always/ irregularly. Spaces fill/ with a kind of/ soothing electric vibration./ Our senses, restored, never/ to be the same, whisper to us./ They existed. They existed./ We can be. Be and be/ better. For they existed."

Nibir K. Ghosh
Chief Editor

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**“MY WORDS ARE MY WEAPONS”
CONVERSATION WITH SHARAN KUMAR LIMBALE**

Nibir K. Ghosh & Sunita Rani

My mother is an untouchable, while my father is a high caste from one of the privileged classes of India. Mother lives in a hut, father lives in a mansion. Father is a landlord; mother, landless. I am akarmashi (half-caste). I am condemned, branded illegitimate. – Sharan Kumar Limbale

Our chance to meet Professor Sharan Kumar Limbale – the inimitable icon of Dalit writing who shook the complacent Indian literary sensibility with his magnum opus Akarmashi – came our way when he graciously accepted our invitation to be the Guest of Honour at the recent International Conference on “Negotiating Margins: African American and Dalit Writings” organized by the Osmania University Centre for International Programmes (OUCIP), Hyderabad and ICSSR, New Delhi. After being held spellbound by his powerful address, we were keen to engage him in a veritable face-to-face on issues of import concerning both Indian society and literature. The following conversation brings to the fore his uninhibited role both as activist and literary genius.

Interviewers: Your gracious presence at this international conference has decisively enriched the practical dimension of subaltern discourse. During the span of the three-day event you have listened to numerous deliberations on both African American and Dalit voices. What are your impressions?

Limbale: This conference has been a kind of revelation for me in many ways. I had always thought in terms of discrimination and exploitation with respect to Hindu society. It has been a rewarding experience to listen to enthusiastic young scholars who have come here with progressive ideas to talk about changing perspectives.

- **Dr. Sunita Rani** is Associate Professor, Department of Hindi, Agra College, Agra. She was Visiting Scholar in the Department of South Asian Languages at the University of Washington, Seattle, U.S.A. during 2003-04.

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MY KIND OF EXILE

Tenzin Tsundue

I am more of an Indian. Except for my chinky Tibetan face. - Tenzin Tsundue

Ask me where I'm from and I won't have an answer. I feel I never really belonged anywhere, never really had a home. I was born in Manali, but my parents live in Karnataka. Finishing my schooling in two different schools in Himachal Pradesh, my further studies took me to Madras, Ladakh and Mumbai. My sisters are in Varanasi but my brothers are in Dharamsala. My Registration Certificate (my permit to stay in India) states that I'm a foreigner residing in India and my nationality is Tibetan. But Tibet as a nation does not feature anywhere on the world political map. I like to speak in Tibetan, but prefer to write in English, I like to sing in Hindi but my tune and accent are all wrong. Every once in a while, someone walks up and demands to know where I come from....My defiant answer "Tibetan" raises more than just their eyebrows....I'm bombarded with questions and statements and doubts and sympathy. But none of them can ever empathise with the plain simple fact that I have nowhere to call home and in the world at large all I'll ever be is a 'political refugee'.

When we were children in a Tibetan school in Himachal Pradesh, our teachers used to regale us with tales of Tibetans suffering in Tibet. We were often told that we were refugees and that we all bore a big 'R' on our foreheads. It didn't make much sense to us, we only wished the teacher would hurry up and finish his talk and not keep us standing in the hot sun, with our oiled hair. For a very long time I sincerely believed that we were a special kind of people with an 'R' on our foreheads. We did look different from the local Indian families who lived around our school campus: the butcher family who killed twenty-one sheep and goats every morning (when the goats bleated with half-cut throat from behind the slaughterhouse, we used to throw stones at the tin roof).

Tenzin Tsundue is a writer and activist. Born to a Tibetan refugee family labouring on India's border roads in Himachal in early 1970s, he is the author of four books.

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FICTION AND HISTORY

Jasbir Jain

Both Fiction and History use narrative forms, configure events, refer to the same world contexts and often adopt similar strategies in the pursuit of the actual event. Yet they progress differently, raise different expectations and have a different relationship with the reader. Again, though both seek to represent the 'real' and pursue 'truth', the real and truth of each is different. Their relationship with the past also follows a different course. While history is dominantly concerned with the pastness of the past as it was lived at one time, fiction enters the past in order to bring it to the present; and accordingly time and memory and their negotiation of temporality function differently. While history cannot abandon its internal logic, coherence and linearity in which causality is an underlying strand, fiction is free to cross these boundaries and move outside linearity and the coherence determined by causality resisting a temporary closure or an explanation. Their adoption of visible ideological positions which often go on to determine the configuration of their narrative is also different in its manifestations.

Hayden White's fourfold division of historical emplotments of nineteenth century history openly borrows the schemata from Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. He writes that in order to figure out "what really happened in the past ... the historian must first *prefigure* as a possible object of knowledge the whole set of events reported in the documents" and it is this prefiguration which is represented through metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony each classifying variously as Romance, Tragedy, Comedy and Satire (*Metahistory* 30-34). The historian's dependence on documents and excavations is his major source of substantiation, while a fiction writer's dependence on these sources is limited and filtered through the creative imagination. Some heavily researched narratives end up as stiff narratives while others transcend the limits of the source material. Fictional representation can fall back on experience, inherited knowledge, family histories and moral values for that matter. It can also indulge in pure imagination and enter into a debate on abstractions such as freedom, justice and moral norms.

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ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE: MURAKAMI'S *A WILD SHEEP CHASE* AND KAWABATA'S *SNOW COUNTRY*

Jonathan Little

Haruki Murakami's work has often been set in binary opposition to earlier, more traditional Japanese writers of fiction such as Yasunari Kawabata and Yukio Mishima. In his book *Dances With Sheep*, Matthew Strecher states that, "Murakami makes no pretense of being heir to Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, Kawabata Yasunari, or even more recent Japanese literary spokesmen such as Oe or Abe Kobo who, along with Mishima Yukio, are considered by many to have been Japan's truly international writers" (Strecher 5). Strecher and other critics argue that Murakami's frequent inclusion of Western cultural referents (including music, literature, movies, restaurants, advertising and popular culture) his reliance on the Western literary allusions and forms, such as the American hard-boiled detective novel instead of haiku-inspired lyricism, and the absence of traditional Japanese-ness and culture make his works more appealingly international and global than truly Japanese. This construction or representation of Murakami therefore puts him at odds with Kawabata and Mishima, who were much more interested in promoting a sense of distinctive and empowering Japanese identity in the face of Western modernism and influence. Indeed, this view of Murakami is supported by Murakami himself, who has recently said in an interview: "Authors I do not like are (Yasunari) Kawabata (1899-1972) and (Yukio) Mishima (1925-1970). I cannot accept their works instinctively" ("I Live an Ordinary Life"). Murakami has also made statements that traditional Japanese life does not interest him, and that, as a youth, "I was obsessed with foreign fiction and simply never bothered to read Japanese novels" ("The (Generally) Sweet Smell of Youth" p. xxiii).

In order to cast some light on Murakami's relationship to Japanese philosophy, culture and his Japanese literary predecessors, I will compare Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982) with Yasunari Kawabata's classic traditional Japanese novel *Snow Country* (1956).

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**AMBIGUITIES OF MODERN EXISTENCE IN
ARUN KOLATKAR'S *JEJURI*
Ruchi Singh**

Arun Kolatkar (1932-2004), Mumbai's most successful art director and a 'visualizer' in advertising parlance, won the prestigious Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1977 for his collection of poems *Jejuri*, published in 1977. Influenced by the avant-garde movements of the West, Kolatkar was radically experimental with his works. His poetry in Marathi is considered to be the epitome of the Modernist movement in India.

Jejuri, a sequence of 37 poems, is a social and cultural critique of twentieth century India and a manifestation of its modernist credo. It is a collection of short and long poems built around the objects seen and the experiences evoked in the protagonist on his visit to the pilgrim centre Jejuri. The poems evoke a sequence of images that unsettle the reader presenting the ambiguities of existence in modern life. It exposes the perturbed relationship of a modern sensitive individual with its religious culture. My attempt in this paper is to capture this predicament of modern man over the loss of belief in religion, commercialization of rituals and spirituality, and mortification of science and technology.

The protagonist is a city dweller who yearns for the view of country life and sets on his journey to the Khandoba temple of Jejuri. Jejuri is not a very sought after place apparent from the tarpaulin flaps and the rural folks. The state transport bus adds to the note of ordinary life. An old man with a caste mark is also travelling with the young man. The old man's destination and purpose is well defined by the caste mark. He is going on a spiritual journey. Caste mark can also be taken as a mark of distinction, division, exploitation on the basis of caste. The sunbeam trying to make its way into the bus seems to represent enlightenment for which the pilgrim is longing; it shoots at the old man's glasses and a part of it gently rests on the right temple of the driver. Like the tarpaulin flap that prevents the glimpse of country life, ignorance is a curtain between the devotee and the deity. The protagonist is juxtaposed with the old man in the bus.

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SONG OF THE CAGED BIRD: REINTERPRETING RASSUNDARI DEVI'S *AMAR JIBAN*

Sanghamitra Bhatt

The nineteenth century, being the Renaissance period in India, saw the recasting of almost every sphere of life and emergence of new trends. The first half of the century experienced the revival of classic literary works of the bygone ages by colonizers to understand and prove the uncivilized state of society. On the basis of these findings, they brought forth the barbaric nature of Indian civilization and framed their 'Civilizing Mission' to justify their rule in India. Their description of Indian civilization in general was based on their findings of the treatment of women in Indian society. Such foregrounding, on the one hand, affirmed the grip of the colonial rule in India while on the other hand, gave way to the reformation efforts on specific issues which could be seen as women issues.

These reformation efforts opened up new forums of discussion in the public domain which led to the formation of a specific public sphere. It was the sphere of interface between the educated Indian male intelligentsias and the colonial administrators. This was actually the sphere of domination of the colonial rulers and of subjugation of the Indian intelligentsia, perceived by them as the struggle laden domain. This struggle and insult-laden public sphere prompted them to create another segregated space – the private sphere, where they could reign supreme. In the form of private sphere they conceived a sphere of their own where their spiritual culture could be kept safe and secure. They assigned the responsibility of preserving the sanctity of the inner sphere and of molding the future generation of the nation to women and to carry it on they imparted rudimentary education to them. The education, though very rudimentary in nature, brought forth new insights and awareness. In the light of this the women could easily perceive the basis of their own construct and subjugation. It can be seen that directly or indirectly women were at the root of dichotomy of this politico-social sphere.

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GEORGE ELIOT AND VICTORIAN DILEMMA

Charu Bhandari & Sharad Rajimwale

“Her life and fiction together speak of the entire century.” This statement by Frederick Karl, asserts that George Eliot, more than anyone else, was the most representative and finest novelist of the Victorian Era. It was an age which was marked by bursting energy of voluminousness and elaborate patterns. It was an era of luxurious growth of ideas, forms, styles and materialistic gains. It was also an epoch of political consciousness, democratic reforms, industrial and mechanical progress, scientific advancement, social unrest, educational expansion and religious uncertainty. Nearly everything in those turbulent days of prosperity and poverty was done on a large scale: dresses, fiction, poetry and architecture. Elaborateness seems to be the presiding spirit. The age, it appeared, was trying to capture the Elizabethan magnificence by expanding its scale of treatment of subjects. Hence in furniture, costumes, paintings and literature, the expansive sense of grandiose dictated the taste. It was the time of hope and dismay, of great confidence coupled with anxiety, doubt and fear. It was a period of dramatic change that brought England to the highest pinnacle of development as a world power. Nevertheless, it was an age of great contradictions, that generated the brooding mood of skepticism, so well expressed by Matthew Arnold in “Dover Beach.” The inherent contradictions of the great Victorian Age were lucidly articulated by Charles Dickens in the opening passage of *A Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity...we were all going direct the other way...” (3).

Industrial advancement created social unrest and economic distress among the masses. It shook the supremacy of aristocratic class and brought into being the power of a new merchant class. This new class clamoured for greater power both politically and socially and the old traditions and conventions were subjected to greater pressures. As a result, large cracks could be seen in the Victorian fabric.

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EXISTENTIAL STRAINS IN ANITA DESAI'S FEMALE PROTAGONISTS

Neetu Tyagi

“The wind of change forever blows/ Across the tumult of our ways/
Tomorrow's unborn griefs depose/ The sorrow of our yesterdays”
(Naidu ll. 7-10). These philosophical lines of Sarojini Naidu are nice
exposition of the futility of life and inner shriek of human mind to
achieve unattainable goals. The term “Existentialism,” one of the most
exciting and creative movements of the modern world, was introduced
by the French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre in his three-word formula,
“Existence precedes essence.” Sartre propounded his belief on the
notion that “there is no God, no original idea and that man first of all
exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself
afterwards” (Existentialism is a Humanism). Existentialists firmly
believe that no meaning is predetermined by God for a man but he
himself has to search his roles and positions. The philosophy of
Existentialism, which deals with recurring problems of finding
meanings within existence, has deeply influenced writers all over the
world, including Anita Desai.

Anita Desai is undoubtedly marvelous in portraying the existential
trauma of her female protagonists. She probes into the inner psyche of
her figures and pours it before readers. Her novels represent the
characters caught up in situations and systems well beyond their
control. They are found to be trapped into the whirlpool of adverse
situations and opposite circumstances. A close study of her texts
raises several question related to the existence of her female
protagonists: Do Desai's women really exist in her literary works or
they pale into insignificance against their counterparts? Do they
actually find any meaning and charm in their lives? Why do they react
in abnormal and absurd manner? Are they really absurd? This article is
an attempt to find out the answers to these queries.

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MODES OF DALIT PROTEST IN BAMA'S *HARUM-SCARUM SAAR AND OTHER STORIES*

Pramod Kumari

In recent years, with the rise in genre of Dalit literature, Bama, the Tamil Dalit writer, emerged at the forefront. Her work is characterized by startling language, ethnographic detail and native idiom. Dalit writing in Tamil has gone hand in hand with political activism and with critical and ideological debate. Much of the Tamil Dalit writing is primarily concerned with raising awareness of the Dalit experience.

Bama's work may be seen along with the works of Vidiveli, Imayam and Marku who are exploring the changing Dalit identity. Bama emerged as one of the most original and forceful novelists in Tamil with the publication of her gripping autobiography *Karukku* in 1992. Her second novel *Sangati* (1994), confirmed her reputation as an innovative Dalit novelist. *Vanmam* (2002) is the third novel written by her. Her volumes of short stories *Kisumbukaran* (1996) and *Oru Thathavun Aerumaiyum* show that she has considerably extended the art of the Dalit short story in Tamil. Bama's use of language is typical of ordinary people and she uses the colloquial variety as her medium for narration and argument, not simply for reported speech. She uses the Dalit style of language and aesthetics of received upper class and upper caste Tamil.

After being anointed in Jammu-Kashmir, Bama came to Chennai and worked as a nun in a convent in Georgetown area for three years. Describing the experience, she says: "I felt like I was in an alienated place. Dalit culture seemed so different to convent culture. Their luxuries, food habits were all very excessive. I don't know the names of some of the food they used to eat. I don't like the way they related with the poor and the needy. I left everything behind and walked off" (*JLA* 266).

Kisumbukaran and *Oru Thathavun Aerumaiyum* are her two collections of short stories. Her volumes show that she has considerably extended the art of the Dalit short story in Tamil.

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EXPLOITATION OF WOMAN IN HARIHARAN'S *THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT*

Anju Bala Sharma & Tanu Gupta

Since ages woman has been the victim of male domination and oppression. The postcolonial woman novelist Githa Hariharan explores in her first award-winning novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* the marriages, old traditional values, story and myth, passion and loneliness in the lives of Indian women. Marriage becomes an instrument of female exploitation and oppression leading to loneliness, hollowness and incapability. "There is no remedy to sexual politics in marriage" (Millett 147). This statement is explored by Githa Hariharan in *The Thousand Faces of Night*. This novel is yet another version of female 'novel of marriage' in which the woman does not live happily after getting married. Germaine Greer, in her *The Female Eunuch*, tells women that "to be emancipated from the helplessness and need to walk freely upon the earth is your birth right," maintaining that marriage is the chief cause of woman's helplessness and oppression (Greer 53).

Simone de Beauvoir writes: "It is said that marriage diminishes man: it is often true; but it almost always annihilates women" (Beauvoir 530). Hariharan in her novel has focused on the inner life of woman through three generations – Devi, the daughter; mother Sita and maid Mayamma, each has her own life story to tell. The experiences of Devi, Sita, Mayamma and other minor female characters show how disillusionment, springing from the absence of healthy communication and reciprocal care, results in the estrangement of individuals and leads women to a state of depression. Nayantara Sahgal also describes marriage as a "life-long damage" if the other partner is not sensitive enough to communicate.

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RADICAL ELEMENTS IN *NECTAR IN A SIEVE*

Harshdeep

Fiction is essentially the most intimate consciousness of life and society. It has some purpose to fulfill and some plans to act upon for the welfare of society. When it contemplates and analyses contemporary society, it observes changes taking place in life and society and these changes are presented in the fictional form. In Indian Fiction, there is a long history of protest against the contemporary situation and direct or indirect appeal for a change in that situation. For instance in *Kapalkundla* (1885) and *Durgesh Nandini* (1890), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee imbibes patriotic feelings of Bengal and exposes the shame and hypocrisy of contemporary life and society. Similarly Ramesh Chandra Dutta's two novels, *The Lake of Palms* (1909) and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909), aim at the removal of social evils and superstitions through social reform. *The Wreck* (1921) and *Gora* (1923) by Rabindranath Tagore, *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) by Mulk Raj Anand and *Kanthpura* (1938) by Raja Rao highlight issues that are seminal to the study of Indian society.

The novels of Kamala Markandaya fall in this very category. Though in her novels she does not urge for collective action against the oppressor, there is vivid portrayal of exploitation in different forms. That is what I wish to portray in Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. There are basically two main issues raised in this novel and both are very important to contemporary society. These include acquisition of agricultural land for industry without any care or compensation for landless peasants who lived by it and the issue of miserable condition of women in Indian society.

Kamala Markandaya chooses a simple mode of narration. The narrator heroine, Rukmani, uses the traditional omniscient narrative voice. Rukmani, the youngest of the four daughters of a once prosperous village headman, is married to a tenant farmer, Nathan, who is poor in all respects. By the time of her marriage, the heyday of her father comes to an end resulting in her marriage with a poor peasant.

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ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN POETRY

Divya Walia

Nature has been inspiring literary artists for a long time; especially during the Romantic Age in English literature many writers emerged on the literary scene who were moved by not just the beauty of Nature but also the rough moods of it. Wordsworth in his *The Prelude* considered nature as his teacher who used to scold him and rebuke him by showing the harsh side of her, just as a mother or teacher does to correct the child.

Owing to rapid industrialization and technological developments over the last century, nature and environment are getting adversely affected. Man, in order to remain in the race for power and development, has started exploiting nature and environment for creating a comfortable and luxurious life for himself. Consequently, man's existence itself is getting endangered by so many calamities that are playing havoc in the lives of so many people in so many countries. Wordsworth believed that Nature shows her sterner moods to curb human beings from wrong doings and is capable of teaching them morality and ways of controlling their lives. He stated that Nature's power of doing all these things was unlimited and uncontrolled: "When, from behind that craggy steep till then/ The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge, As if with voluntary power instinct,/ Upreared its head" (*The Prelude* Book I, ll. 377-380).

Different writers hailing from different parts of England during different periods of history have shown affinity with nature in one way or the other. Their different attitudes towards various aspects of nature and environment reflect the relationship of nature and environment in terms of not only the physical existence of human beings but also their emotional and spiritual side. Such study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment has been termed as "ecocriticism" by Cheryl Glotfelty, one of the pioneers in the field. Interest in the study of nature and literature with a focus on "green" issues grew through the 1980s, and by the early 1990s ecocriticism had emerged as a recognizable discipline.

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PLACE AND CHARACTER IN JAHNAVI BARUA'S *REBIRTH*

Nityananda Pattanayak

Place has a definite working upon the mind of a person. It shapes the personality of a person who knows where he is. So a person must have a strong sense of place. Wallace Stegner argues that a character with a sense of place, of rootedness, and therefore, a true sense of self-awareness defines his self (199-204). A character with a deep seated connection to a certain place discovers his/her own strength and inner worthiness. This sense of place is very important for the development of self-awareness; it is invaluable to a person's sense of self. Michael Kowalewski in his essay "Writing in Place: The New American Regionalism" too states that "memory cannot function without place, that we can have no awareness of past events of our lives "without a sense of place in which they happened" (174). A sense of place, the place where characters experience their life's journey gives them the ability to form true self-awareness. A character attains knowledge of himself through his complex sense of place.

It is imperative for people to have a sense of place within their own region and, to be more focused, in their own town/neighborhood. It is with this sense and understanding that people can more fully and more completely construct their own sense of self. Mary Austin in her "Regionalism in American Fiction" states that "art, considered as the expression of any people as a whole, is the response they make in various mediums to the impact that the totality of the experience makes upon them, and there is no sort of experience that works so constantly and subtly upon man as his regional environment" (99).

A creative writer understands first the need of complete immersion in and knowledge of the environment that dictates the life lived in the work. Thus a sense of place is extremely important to the configuration of a person's sense of self because "feelings are bound up in places" (Welty 233).

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REVIEW ESSAY

WHERE POETRY MAKES EVERYTHING HAPPEN: NARENDRA MODI'S *A JOURNEY*

K. K. Srivastava

As I said: Nobody can live real poetry. You have to survive it. – Veronica Valeanu, Romanian Poet

Illustratively, Giambattista Vico and Jorge Luis Borges, when they talk of the art of poetry, they leave a vexing choice to their readers as to the true cause of poetry. Borges gracefully blames perpetual 'perplexity', while Vico lays his hands on 'curiosity, the daughter of ignorance' as the principal element poetry springs from. Essentially speaking, every poet finds one *raison d'être* or another for penning his thoughts but ultimately poetic outpourings owe their birth to, as Narendra Modi rightly mentions in his book of poems, *A Journey: A Collection of 67 Poems*, what has been "witnessed, experienced and sometimes imagined." Originally written in Gujarati, the translator has produced a work of terrific quality in highly involved and concerned manner with a zest admirable. This is a book of poetry, replete with emotions and feelings and remarkable for the poet's deft handling of realities and intangibilities inherent in the core of human existence and alterations in it: "Bereft of love, crippled, melancholy, despondent/ Each moment a pearl of sadness, threaded by absence" ("Coldness").

Reminiscent of Ezra Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," "frankness as never before/disillusions as never told in the old days.../ Bewildered that a world/ Shows no surprise.../ The discouraging doctrine of chances/ And his desire for survival/ Faint in the most strenuous moods..." or Hindi poet Muktibodh's "Andhere Mein" ("In The Dark"):

*Wah rahasyamay vayakti
ab tak na pai gai meri abhivyakti hai
sooni hai raah, ajeeb hai failao
sard andhera
tilasmi khoh mein dekha tha ek bar
aakhri bar hi...jahan mil sake mujhe
meri woh khoi hui
param abhivyakti anivar
aatmsambhava.*

(That mysterious man/ my expression I have not found as yet/ empty road, strange expansion/ darkness cold...in that mysterious cave I saw

him once/ last time/...where I may find/ my lost/ final expression/
unstoppable/ self-born). Modi's *A Journey* succinctly captures the
disquieting and destabilising issues plaguing a thinking man's
consciousness that vies with itself to achieve an equilibrium between a
single consciousness and divergent voices rampant on the scene. His
poems address the concerns as to how to accumulate that one single
energy needed to intuit and activate cycles of spiritual and intellectual
growth of the individuals and society.

Postmodern anxieties and aberrations seize the poet who not merely
grapples with the echoes emanating from his longing for connections
with what he calls, "All this is emptiness, A grand pillar, amidst ruins,"
but also with the questions that meditate between stillness and arcane
flux: "We yearn to become immortal/ tomorrow,/ Clinging to the
attachments of/ yesterday/ And the betrayals of today./ Is there any
meaning in a life like/ this? ("Today").

Normally poets don't escape a blurring of vision when they deal with
dreams and realities but Narendra Modi neither suppresses truth nor
shrinks from telling reality: "I am a man of naked reality./ I see the sky/
To be infatuated by the rainbow./ But my home is built on stone/ Never
on a rainbow ("Seeds of Dreams").

A Journey being a poetic attempt to delve into the introspective
musings of the poet, "I explained this to myself/ It was my awakening,"
attains a wholeness of simplicity and intensity while retaining the
passion for reality and commitment. The exterior of the poems
explores the interior world of minds multitudinous and, as the readers
unravel intricate narrative thread of poems, they come face to face with
the larger symbols that life lays bare before the brooding human
consciousness lolling out before them: "So easy on the eye/ As
evening falls/ Inside my mind's eye, one tree/ opens fully/ In the
darkness blossom starlike/ flowers/ Wearing butterfly's wings I float in
the wind ("View").

The poet's loneliness is heroic and so are his struggles. He rejoices in
his poem, "Such People": "In the wind the tree swings without
concern/ Since time eternal, lies are alien to nature." The poet derives
unwavering fruitfulness in the face of life's forbidding and blank walls.
Sufferings become the journey in the end and the journey initiates a
process of hope and dream: "And each face I see, unfolds a/ memory./
My recall comes with ease/ Those sufferings/ They become the
journey in the/ end." Or, as he says in "Beyond the Picture," I rest in
the cloak of a heap of plans/ My voice a distant cry, now you see./

Your own reflection in my eyes.” “The journey in the end” or seeing “Your own reflection in my eyes” suggests the significance of spiritual quest or a journey that leads one towards the interior world: Shuffling of the cards to enter a new world.

For poets time is a vibrating concept: A centre point with flashes that reflect on memory falling back on things luminous and things obscure but it stays alive albeit it's blazing and fading tendencies. Reality of time has only one truth, everything else occurs as its emanations. The mystical poet walks out of his meditation, the tyranny of time with new understandings of the individual, the society and cosmos: God and their relationships: “And everywhere is darkness/ There is a challenge, there is a call./ Search for dreams in ruins/ For they give living meaning/ Forgetting yesterday/ Opening our hearts today,/ Taking support of each other/ Usher a bright new beginning” (“Tomorrow’s Challenge”).

In this poem a discerning reader will spot the desire of ordinary men to live life ever seeking new instruments to replace hackneyed interpretations and to have faith in ultimate goodness of humanity though the path stays arduous.

To paraphrase John Kenneth Galbraith from his celebrated book, *The Age of Uncertainty*, great poets (italics mine) are always willing “to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time.” With metaphysical connotations, fabulously peaked imagination and zenith of emotional intensity, the poet whom the translator describes as “a spiritual seeker” allows seamless merging into his poems of themes like nostalgia, love, beauty, loss of innocence, abyss between the known and the unknown, waning human values, and ultimately achieves through these poems a unique world full of honesty and courage that aims at tackling major anxieties of our times. The voice in many poems exudes confidence with flashes of generosity, large-heartedness and unique wisdom. Versification is smooth and readers sink into a quagmire of music of sweet sounds. Poems in this collection, evocative and poignant, once afloat on the surface will bring insightfulness in others’ hearts and awaken the minds to bloom, expand and glow.

REFERENCE

A Journey: Poems of Narendra Modi. Translated from the Gujarati by Ravi Mantha. New Delhi: Rupa, 2014. pp. 89+xii. ₹ 295. The review is republished here with the kind permission of *The Pioneer*.

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PERSPECTIVES ON TIJAN SALLAH'S ART

Priscilla R. Ramsey

Having edited this collection of essays, Wumi Raji clearly illustrates his awareness of the importance this collection carries as the first extended Reference work on Gambian literature and on Dr. Sallah's writing in particular. Raji expresses his purposes for collecting and editing these essays when he explains that he wants: "To stimulate further interest...deeper awareness and to expand the scope of debates and discussion of this relatively neglected but vital aspect of African postcolonial writing" (15).

Raji has divided the book into five sections where each of the sections contains anywhere from one to five essays by African, American, Asian and British scholars familiar with African literature and its history in general providing contextual support for Sallah's writing. The basis for their understanding of the field rests in the fact that Raji has provided at the back of the book an "About the Authors" section describing the contributors' expertise in the field. This explanatory background section of the book is very useful to readers because it provides further evidence of schooling, background and interests which help document the exact nature of expertise and background the contributors bring to the project. The concerns of the contributors range broadly (thus, topically) from a focus on Tijan Sallah's early poetry where his political sensitivities toward European postcolonial perceptions of Africans will evolve over time, to an assertive Gambian identity illustrated in its culture, its natural beauty and its spiritual depth. This overview does not assume that Sallah romanticizes Africa. Not the case at all. Instead, he will look closely at the political excesses of modern Africa where leaders have become greedy for power and wealth, thus, endangering the people's future. Moreover the essays throughout the five sections illustrate, in great detail, an understanding of the political, geographic and spiritual sources for Sallah's writing.

Each essayist's handling of the observations about Sallah's work are remarkably thorough, sophisticated and precise. Indeed, Sallah's biographical details – particularly, those relating to the influence of Gambia's first English writing poet, physician, Dr. Lenrie Peters and his mentoring relationship with Sallah – all become part of the biographical information laced along with the technical throughout the “Introduction” and the remainder of the essays. In addition to the poetry, Sallah's short stories and essays are not overlooked as subjects of critical writing. For the most part, Sallah tends to capture African and American political and cultural themes in his poetry. With the exception of his “Harrow Poems,” he does not tend toward the personal in his subject matter. For one, in the early years of his writing when he first came to America, he was particularly concerned with the American “Tarzan” image of Africa. He was often writing as the “spokesman” for a Continent when he attempted to correct this vision. In Tanure Ojaide's essay, “An Unusual Growth: The Development of Tijan M. Sallah's Poetry,” one finds Sallah stating: “Snowflakes/ At midnight,/ Snowflakes/ Whisper/ On my roof/ Like Witch Doctors/ Muttering incantations” (43).

Ojaide writes that the poet, in his book, *Dream Kingdom: New and Selected Poems* (2007) combines an “...emotional disposition where Sallah conflates his American and African experiences into a unified persona of one excited by a new environment with all its novelty and convenience but whose enthusiasm is dampened by the prevailing racism and nostalgia for his African home” (43). Samuel B. Garren in his essay, “Exile and Return: The Poetry and Fiction of Tijan Sallah,” captures Sallah's impatience with the Tarzan notion even more poignantly when he selects these poetic words by Sallah in his book *When Africa Was a Young Woman* (1980): “Tarzan Never Lived in My Africa/ Let us not live in / Phantasmagoria/ Tarzan never lived in my Africa” (19). Sallah captures here, and throughout this collection, the parallels between a sensitive handling of women and their victimization with a paralleling form of victimization embodied both in the Tarzan imagery and in the postcolonial presumptions of Africa's oppression. Indeed, throughout these poems, the condition of women becomes a metaphor for the condition of Africa at the hands of greedy, exploitative industrialists.

Despite his sympathy for the oppression of women, Garren selects a poem by Sallah in his *Kora Land* (1989) illustrating the care and timidity the poet, perhaps, felt toward selecting a wife, his life long partner: “Like the Rest of Them / I must pick the grounds of my life,/

Like the meticulous caretaker,/ Weigh every ounce of dust and sun,/ Like the lonely petal among imposing flowers” (22). His descriptions evoke a delicacy toward the hidden subject of wife selection and love. He must be temperate. Garren explains: “The poet bides his time, not permanently curtailing love and marriage.” In his essay, “Poetry as Therapy” Enajite E. Ojaruega writes: “The ‘Harrow Poems’ will remain unique in Tijan M. Sallah's poetic career. It is poetry directed toward a private function, quite unlike his other poems, which either extol Gambia Wolof values or criticize American racism and materialism. These poems are geared to be used as healing therapy, as chants he has used to improve his health” (200). Moreover, Ojaruega will explain how having been hit by a car slowed Sallah’s economic and intellectual progress as an economist, an ambitious man of the world greatly. In one of the “Harrow Poems,” Sallah hints at this massive encumbrance when he says: “Here I Lie Now/ Life has a way of coming to a bump,/ When I am speeding aimlessly on the hump/ Of the quest for coins and fame./ For why should I suddenly be lame” (136).

Sallah was recuperating in a London hospital after his accident when he wrote these poems and many of them are centered on his feeling of helplessness yet philosophically understanding this helplessness as it radiates his poetic thinking. Indeed, the poems are uncharacteristically personal and rhyming – unlike most of his other poems.

This collection will be useful to readers starting with those who have a general interest in the subject to serious scholars who will use the essays as explanatory and knowledge building for further research on Sallah’s work. The writing is thematic and, for the most part, clear; while the ideas are complex, they contain none of the circumlocution typical of contemporary critical writing. The two essays by Demola Jolayemi and Tunde Ayodabo on the linguistic features of Sallah's writing will satisfy readers’ desire for a technical understanding of his art.

Clearly this text, particularly due to its introduction to Gambian literature in English, will serve as a defining text for many years to come given its pivotal position in the history of Gambian writing and to the quality of these essays that bring into bold relief the excellence of Sallah’s writing.

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BOOK REVIEW

Susheel Kumar Sharma. *The Door is Half Open*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors. 2012. pp. 141. ₹ 150.00.

The way Susheel Kumar Sharma has combined poetry with scholarship in *The Door is Half Open* is amazing. In this collection Sharma records not only his own experiences but also his thoughts. *The Door is Half Open* is nicely got up and well-printed. The cover page is impressive and the picture of the door of a king's palace indicates the aristocratic mindset of the poet. But poets are often the spokespersons of the common humanity. The courageous poet dislikes the half-open doors and with the help of his poetic language and poetic words he wants to open it for himself and common Indians. For most of the Indians, because of the reservation policy, political mismanagement and corruption doors of employment, bread, butter and medical facilities are not open. The volume should be read as a reaction of the poet against a corrupt system which has become synonym of loot, fascism, commission-culture and exploitation. The poet struggles hard to open the doors of opportunities and new avenues. He laments: "Hope swims in the pool/ Of money that will buy/ Blood of the same group./ The heart jumps/ Like a football/ Crying 'Do this, do that'/ 'Ay, sister here, ay, sister there'./ Chain, plaster, lifting gear / All useless./ Only the sky is silver"(41).

There is a tension of voice of freedom and voice of frustration in this volume. The poet musters up courage to speak the truth and this beautiful volume should be admired for his courage and convictions. His aim is to decolonise the Indian English poets, readers, students and teachers. He has succeeded to a great extent in this aim. The volume shows Sharma a poet of courage and conviction. Ancient India and future India come alive in all their shades of glory and conviction. His poetry cannot be said to be an outcome of his spontaneity and naturalness of expression. It is the product of his conscious poetic and

political mind. In his poems he interprets his own life and like politicians he peters out poems which are in fact his poetic manifestations. All the poems of this volume originate from his mental powers and his deep desire to enter into the gates of poetry, literature, religion and politics.

Sharma's book has come when the dangers of nuclear warfare, global warming, global terrorism, criminalisation of politics, changing demography of the world torment humanity. Dinkar said, "sinhasan khali karo ki janta ati hai" ("vacate the throne because people are arriving") and our Sharma cries: "The Door is Half Open." I find connection between Dinkar and Susheel. Half opened doors must be opened by masses. Dinkar aims at the throne and Sharma at entering the Kingdom of God and making India a better republic with no economic and social disparities. True poetry, like the Ganges, opens the doors of liberation, peace and progress for all. But in Sharma's case the door is half-open and therefore he feels frustrated and enchained. The merit of the book lies in showing the glory of India as seen and felt by Sharma. He boldly proclaims: "I don't want to bury/ The glories of the past;/ I don't want to fetter/ The freedom of the past;/ I don't want to gag/ The chanting of the *rishis'* mantras;/ I don't want to hide/ The development of the past;/ I don't want to ride/ The jet of the present;/.../ I don't want to be a Blair/ Or a Clinton to enchain the world./ I just want my *Ganga/ To be my Ganga* (6).

The Door is Half-Open is an inevitable book of poems for all those who think that sanskritization is still possible. The book succeeds in breaking the walls of casteism, favouritism, nepotism, regionalism and terrorism and encourages building good human relationship. The poems of this volume have a social purpose as well as they will encourage the readers to join the movement like "Save Ganga" while others will be inspired to join "Save India, Save Indianness."

The language of this book offers truth, beauty, goodness, harmony, sweetness in abundance and holds the key to a social, democratic Indian revolution. Paul Valery says that "Poetry is an act of language." I would like to say that this book invites all readers of poetry in a Frostian tone "you come too!"

- Suresh Chandra Dubey

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