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LITERARY VOICE

A Bi-Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal

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Contents

Editorial Note

The present issue of *Literary Voice* is exclusively devoted to the Indian English Literature. The scholars have trained their critical lenses on various facets of Indian English literature which has engaged the attention and sustained the interest of the reading public all over the globe. The focus has been by and large, on the thematic concerns such as complexities of human relationships, gender-specific and cultural identities, ecological post-colonialism, multidimensional portrayal of diaspora life, the blood-stained realities of the contemporary Indian polity, narrative techniques, and socio-anthropological dimensions of the literary texts. Apart from analysing literary texts of Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Shashi Deshpande, Salman Rushdie and Arun Joshi, the scholars have focused on the established woman poet Sujata Bhatt and emerging poetess, Meena Kandasamy. Hari Kunzru and Preeti Singh, the writers of Indian diaspora, have engaged the critical attention.

The articles on Mahasweta Devi (Bangla), Indira Goswami (Assamese) and S.L. Bhyrappa (Kannada) are informed by refreshing and insightful interpretation/analysis of the selected literary texts, and add richness, beauty and variety to the literature produced/being produced in regional languages of India.

The book reviews by illustrious scholars as Prof. Rajesh K. Sharma, Prof. Tejinder Kaur, Profs. R.K. Bhushan Sabharwal and Navdeep Pannu, not only enhance the value but also add to the academic credibility of our modest endeavours. The Poetry Column has provided creative space to known and not so known entities.

The members of the Editorial Board have ungrudgingly performed the arduous task of reviewing/approving of the articles which eventually find space in the present number of *Literary Voice*. But for their willingness to accomplish the task within the deadline, I would not have been able to place *LV* in your hands. I hope and trust you will earnestly partake of the rich intellectual feast that is intended through the present issue of *Literary Voice*.

T. S. Anand
Editor

Redefining Relationships: Women in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Binding Vine*

Dr. Sangeeta Yadav & Prof. Pashupati Jha
I.I.T. Roorkee

While discussing female-centric literature with reference to Indian society, very few writers have been successful in portraying Indian women with vive and verve. But Shashi Deshpande has created her female characters with vitality and vigour, with renewed perception of life, and yet the traditional old Indian values have reached such significant depth and subtlety as in her novels.

Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists are ever yearning to unyoke themselves from the pre-defined and pre-determined roles imposed on them by a rigid and insensitive society. But instead of taking a radical feminist stand, they opt for a balanced view of life, blending modernity with tradition. G.S.Amur in his Preface to her first book, *The Lagacy and Other Stories*, has rightly remarked: "Women's struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and, most important of all, as human being, is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her important stories" (Deshpande 1978: 10).

Deshpande's female characters are frequently depicted as striving between tradition and modernity for the emancipation of their self. They are educated, middle-class, married and working as well. Deshpande's female protagonists can be best assessed and analyzed in the light of their relationship with their husbands. Man-woman relationship is the core concern of the fiction of Shashi Deshpande. The emotional link between man and woman is an urge for duality and, therefore, the importance given to the institution of marriage in our society is deeply reflected in her fiction. Her focus, naturally, remains on women and their unique feminine experience. She once told in an interview: "My characters take their own ways. I've heard people saying we should have

strong women characters. But my writing has to do with woman as they are" (Viswanath 1987: 12).

The emergence of middle class working women in the still monolith, traditional society has given rise to many complexities unknown to earlier Indian ethos. Although the additional income of husband and wife free them from financial crisis, the dual responsibilities faced by the working wives make their plight miserable most of the time. Deshpande has depicted these problems and many similar related obstacles in the ways of Indian women, who want to chart out a path different from the rigidly assigned ones of the past. As Veena Sheshadri has pointed out: "She believes in presenting life as it is, not as it should be" (1988: 94).

The present paper makes a modest attempt to discuss female characters and their emergence as New Woman in Deshpande's two novels, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) and *The Binding Vine* (1992). The different aspects of each character and the circumstances, which shaped their mindscape in relation to their male counterparts in particular and society in general, have been discussed here in detail. It is also been pointed out that the concern of the novelist for women remains largely the same during the time gap of twelve years between the two novels.

Shashi Deshpande's first published novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, has a woman protagonist, Sarita (Saru). Saru presents poignantly the journey of the modern Indian women towards economic independence, emotional balance, and social recognition. Her character can be better understood if we closely study the childhood of Saru. She has been an unwanted child, always treated as a mere second to her brother, Dhruva. Her sensitive heart fills with hostility and hatred when she sees her parents bestowing all their love on him, sidelining her all the time as if she hardly exits. Although Dhruva is drowned in her presence, it is an accident with no part played by her at all. Yet her mother's constant refrains of her being guilty of her brother's death, "You killed him", puzzles and engulfs her throughout her life. Her father's passivity could not help but makes her all the more aggressive. Deshpande, through all these childhood experience and bitter memories about mother-- "Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?" (191) -- tries to defend Saru for all her later actions in her novel. She is a non-conformist to the point of being a renegade in her community. Although the mother and

daughter are reconciled to each other and the relationship kept traumatising her like the memory of her dead brother; yet there were moments when she wanted desperately to be accepted by her.

The gender discrimination, which Saru has to confront, particularly from her mother, leads to a disturbed psyche and she loses her sense of belongingness. The lack of 'unconditional positive regard', as psychologist Carl Rogers calls it, turns Saru into a problematic child. Her mother's failure to give her love, affection and, more importantly, her approval, in her early growing years, fills her with the feeling of guilt and unworthiness. She becomes defensive in her actions, displaying forbidden type of behavioural pattern. Always contradicting her mother, she feels alienated from the family, yet the craving to belong remains throughout,: "I just didn't exist for her. I died long before I left home" (32). She decides to go to the city and study medicine against her mother's wish. She again defies her mother by marrying Manohar (Manu), a non-Brahmin, and leaves her parental home, taking yet another step towards autonomy. Here, Saru, according to Karen Horney's theory, is adopting one of the three strategies of self-defence. By being offensive, she is trying to get in control of everything around her. As Usha Bande remarks: "Her craving for a vindictive triumph over the traditional forces is combined with a compassion for control, which she demonstrates as she fights her battles with her mother, her husband and later with the society by marrying out of caste and then having affair with Boozie" (2000: 36).

In the second phase of her life, she is a wife and a successful doctor, who is deeply admired by her neighbours, but she realizes soon that this success of a woman in the patriarchal Indian society can lead to serious family crisis: "…When we walked out of our room, there were nods and smiles, murmured greetings and *namastes*. But they were all for me. Only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored…. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller, made him inches shorter" (42).

Shashi Deshpande is certainly aware of the woman's predicament in a male dominated society, especially if she is a breadwinner of the family. Deshpande, through the character of Manohar, has portrayed a male figure trying to hide his inferiority complex by being a tyrant towards his wife to re-establish his superiority over her. Thus, the writer is of confirmed opinion that, even though the husband looks like a

well-educated and modernized version of Adam, in the context of woman's emancipation, he remains a traditional husband, secretly desiring to enjoy the domination over a submissive wife. Deshpande voices it through Saru's speech, which she wishes to give in the function of a women's college:

> Listen, girls...whatever you do, you won't be happy, not really, until you get married and have children…But if you want to be happily married, there's one thing you have to remember. Have you girls seen an old fashioned couple walking together? Have you noticed that the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband? That's important, very important, because it's symbolic of the truth. A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he's an M.A you should be a B.A. If he's 5' 4" tall you shouldn't be more than 5' 3" tall. If he is earning Rs 500, you should never earn more than Rs. 499. That's the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don't ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive- secretary, principal-teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. (137)

It is during this second phase that Saru comes to know from a patient that her mother is dead. She decides to go to her native village, to her ancestral home. During her stay with her father, Saru finds her true self. This homecoming, almost like that of Indu in *Roots and Shadows*, helps her to recapture all the major events of her life and to reexamine their consequences. By coming to her father's house, Saru tries to escape from all the demanding roles of a wife, mother, and a busy doctor. She realizes that all through these years the real Saru in her has been lost somewhere. This difficult and torturous introspection helps her to gain her lost self-esteem:"They came to her then, all those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife…all persons spiked with guilts. Yes, she was all of them; she could not deny them now. She had to accept these selves to become whole again. But if she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more" (220).

Saru, deprived of her mother's love in her childhood, finally seeks understanding and solace in her father's company. She reconsiders her relationship with her husband and reviews all the past events. This retrospection helps her to a better understanding of herself and others. She explores all the dark corners of her soul and realizes that the dark no longer holds any terror for her. The guilt and hatred that have long tormented her, withers away during her stay in her parental home. The obstacles in her way to self-actualization, sublimate; giving her new strength and understanding to face her life candidly and boldly. Thus, while going out to attend the neighbour's sick child when she is expecting Manohar, she asks her father to convey her message to him to wait for her. She is now confident enough to confront her husband: "My life is my own … somehow she felt she had found it now, the connecting link. It means you are not a strutting, grimacing puppet, standing furtively on the stage for a brief while between areas of darkness" (220).

Similarly, in *The Binding Vine*, Deshpande has portrayed women of different sections of society; yet, the predicament they face at the hands of their male counterparts is more or less the same, despite the twelve years of interval between the two novels discussed in this paper. Urmi, the narrator of the novel, is an educated woman, working as a lecturer in a college. She, like most of Deshpande's heroines, is a strong character. She connects herself with other females through the common bondage suffering. Her one-year-old daughter Anusha (Anu) has died, but the strength of her character is revealed through her determined words: "I am not going to break" (19).

Death of her daughter initiates her into a new awakening and she plunges into an inward journey to analyze all the females around her. Hers was a love marriage and during early days of her marriage, she was always happy; but now she finds this relationship more like a trap with no escape. Kishore is in the Navy and comes home only for a while to spend time with his family. This has given rise to a sense of insecurity in Urmi and she fears losing him: "Each time you leave me the parting is like death" (138). She tries to tell him but instead of understanding her emotional side, he asserts himself physically. To Urmi, "Sex is only a temporary answer. I came out of it to find that the lights had come back…. 'Go to sleep', he said. He was kneeling by me his face close to mine, but the closeness was only physical. His voice was cold… I did not look into his face. I was afraid

of what I would see, I turned round and fell asleep" (139).

Being financially independent, Urmi does not use the money Kishore sends to her and thus escapes from her traditional role of being economically dependent on a male. Deshpande also reveals her anguish and suffering for two women being raped, one in marriage and the other by her own uncle. Mira, Urmi's mother-in-law, was a victim of rape in marriage. Urmi comes to know about Mira's suffering through her poems and diaries. If Mira's effort to pen down her pain and loneliness helps her to escape from her unhappy marriage, Urmi's social work provides her the similar refuge. Mira felt stifled with the physicality of her married life. Although her husband possessed her physically, he could not understand her heart and mind. Urmi also faces the similar dilemma, and in her moments of suffering comes closer to a number of women in the novel Shakutai, Kalpana, Vanaa, Mira, Sandhya. Perhaps, the bond between them becomes stronger because all these women are the victims of male chauvinism. Mira cannot walk out of her marriage but seeks refuge in poetry, which is later on discovered by Urmi. Mira's poems reveal the world of a woman trapped in an unwanted relationship. Her resentment at being renamed as Nirmala after her marriage, is expressed in one of her poems:

> Nirmala, they call, I stand statue still,
> Do you build without erasing the old?
> A tablet of rice, a pencil of gold
> Can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira.

On the other hand, Urmi is married to Kishore who " flits into her life a few months in a year and flits out again leaving nothing of himself" (164). She could identify with Mira easily as she herself longs for the similar understanding from her husband. She desires an emotional bonding with him, but Kishore can express himself physically alone. He fails to understand that the link between wife and husband in India goes far deeper, to emotional and spiritual levels too.

Deshpande's presentation of Urmi's character is multidimensional; she is a grieving mother of a dead daughter, trying desperately to find solace in social work, an independent woman who is a contradiction in herself. She likes being a wife and mother, yet she does

not want to use her husband's money. Perhaps, this is her journey from economic independence to emotional independence. She resents her sister-in-law Vanaa's submissive nature and her dependence on her husband. Urmi wants her to be bold and independent: "Assert yourself. You don't have to crawl before him. Do you? … You are scared of him. Yes you are. I've seen you" (80). Deshpande has sketched the characters of women belonging to different classes of society with almost similar fate. If Vanaa, in spite of being an educated woman, can be scared of her husband, Sulu, Shakutai's sister, has a fate worse than Vanaa. Shakutai tells Urmi of her toils and trials: "After marriage she changed. She was frightened, always frightened, what if he doesn't like this, what if he wants that, what if he is angry with me, what if he throws me out…? Nobody should live like that, Urmila, so full of fears" (196).

At the same time, there is an undercurrent of breaking free from all the fears and inhibitions among these women. Like Vanaa says, "…There was a time when all I wanted was to get married, have children and look after my family. I thought that was happiness" (73). She is talking in past tense. She has realized that it takes something more to be completely happy rather than simply being a decorated domestic doll.

But apart from creating characters like Sulu, who commits suicide on becoming aware of her husband's crime; Shakutai, Vanaa, Mira; Deshpande has also depicted characters like Saru and Urmi, who have the strength to stand firm against all odds. In spite of all the difficulties and obstacles caused by the androcentric society, these females endeavour to channelize their emotions and energy in different ways because of their strong urge to survive. They are optimistic with the strength of their own, and despite having inner conflicts they continue their quest for identity. Career for them is integral part of their lives, for it gives them additional courage to face society squarely. Deshpande's female protagonists are not radical feminists like those of Namita Gokhale and Shobha De and, therefore, they try to seek their fulfilment in their own way, modifying but not changing the Indian family life. This brings the novels of Deshpande to authentic portrayal of Indian reality, far from the bizarre depiction by some other novelists largely to arrest Western attention. She once said in an interview: "It's necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy. That is what I have tried to convey in my

writings" (Viswanath 1987: 13). So, she is of the opinion that at times "having a life outside the family is very important for women" (Viswanath 1987: 13). It can, therefore, be said that her female protagonists have managed to achieve their space by redefining their relationships, while maintaining their social values and emerging as fully developed individuals.

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Ethical Consciousness In Khushwant Singh's Novels

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Khushwant Singh has six novels to his credit; *Train to Pakistan, I Shall not Hear the Nightingale, Delhi: the Novel, Burial at Sea, Company of Women* and *The Sunset Club*. However, some critics label him a one-novel novelist. The majority of the critics have not given him any credit for his last three novels. Here in this article, I also limit my study to his first three novels.

Khushwant Singh came into prominence as a novelist when he got Grove Press award in 1956 for his novel *Mano Majra* which was later on rechristened *Train to Pakistan*. This novel is about the communal clashes which flared up in 1947 with the partition of the subcontinent into two parts. The frenzy resulted in brutal death of millions of people and many more than that were rendered homeless and were forced to search for new homes in the alien lands. There was a total failure of governance which resulted in a profusion of entangled events. His second novel, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* was published in 1959, three years after *Train to Pakistan* and twelve years after the Indian independence. The novel has the historical period of 1942-43 as its backdrop, the period which is generally known as a period of Quit India Movement when the Japanese in South-East Asia had unnerved the British Empire. *Delhi: A Novel* which got published in 1989 is a typical example of the interplay of fiction and history, of the present and the past. Focusing on the particular history of six hundred years from the time of Ghiasudin Balban to the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, leading to the massacre of the Sikhs, the novelist traces the portions of biographies of some kings and commoners who participated in the major historical forces and counter-forces that shaped the destiny of Delhi.

Khushwant Singh has often been labelled with an epithet of being

"incorrigible dirty old man" because of his fondness for bold description of sex in his works. His critics have blamed him for unreasonable, unscrupulous and indecent use of sex in his novels. *Train to Pakistan* starts with a sexual encounter: Nooran submitting to Jugga though a bit reluctantly and unwillingly in the open fields under the starry sky in spite of the fact that Mano Majra is passing through a very critical period of history. In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Champak indulges in narcissism and body-glorification at every little excuse. Champak, Shanno and Bina, all indulge in illicit sex affairs. In *Delhi*, man-woman relationships remain bawdy, lewd and boring, with every imaginative variation and perversion: no romance, no love play, only sex.

However, a characterological study of Khushwant Singh's novels reveals that though he believes in shedding the prudish inhibitions, yet that is not an end in itself. Nowhere in his novels, objectified beauty is shown winning the world. The objectification of female bodies in his novels has been used to highlight the higher social, religious, cultural and ethical values. Khushwant Singh is of the firm opinion that the ultimate contribution of an individual towards his society is to follow the established and time-tested discourses of ethical values. His thematic thrust is on the humanistic foundation of time-tested social values in all the three novels we are discussing.

In an interview with M.L. Mehta, Khushwant Singh has stated clearly about *Train to Pakistan*, "The novel was born out of personal agony at seeing the savagery practiced by all communities and my own impotence in preventing it. In some ways, I would have liked to have played the role of Juggat Singh" (KS: Interview 80). His faith in the intrinsic nobility of humanity was shattered badly. "The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country . . . I had believed that we Indians were peace loving and non-violent; that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views" (Dhawan 12, 13). He was an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to voice his disenchantment with the world. To give vent to those bottled up feelings he decided to try his hand at writing. However, it is surprising that no

novel treating the crucial and heart-rending theme of partition was written in English or in any other Indian language until 1956 when *Train to Pakistan* was published. A close perusal of the narrative structure of *Train to Pakistan* reveals that the novel is not only the tragedy of a particular individual but also of the whole village which the novelist portrays as a microcosm of the entire nation caught in turbulence, strife and violence. In this novel, Hukum Chand, Bhai Meet Singh, and Chacha Imam Bakhash are the representatives of that section of the society who are the sufferers and yet are advocates of strong human values. The hero of the novel, Jugga who is a hard core criminal, too, has innate goodness in him. As a lover, he transcends all limitations to sacrifice his self to save his beloved along with other Muslims who were planned to be killed by the retaliating youth.

Foucault has made an educative analysis of ethics of Greek and Christian cultures in the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*. He concludes his analysis by observing that the real inspiration to make some valuable contribution for one's society comes from the ethics of one's heritage. In all societies of the world, ethics are deeply embedded in the religion one follows. In *Train to Pakistan*, the Guru's word from Guru Granth Sahib endows Jugga with the strength to come up to the expectations of the Sikh faith. Taking inspiration from the scriptures, Jugga goes to the scaffold to save Nooran and other Muslims from his village. He contributes practically to "preserving the social structure". He honours the lofty Sikh conventions of making sacrifices for the sake of others. Mirza elaborates, "The novel shows that there are mysterious wellsprings of courage, endurance and affection from which human being draw inspiration at moments of distress to rebuild their lives and to sustain faith in them" (174).

Hukum Chand, the Magistrate, is the representative of the juridical system and administrative machinery. He is a "government" for the simple village folk. Like Juggat Singh, he has also some innate goodness in him. According to Bhaskar Roy Barman, "Hukum Chand seems to me to be the protagonist of the novel, not Jugga, for he protagonizes the concept that has governed the writing of this novel and this explains why Khushwant Singh moves so quickly into the conflict of the state of affairs"(219). The critics who condemn Hukum Chand of being lascivious fail to appreciate that he remains engrossed with magisterial problems

even when he is with the teenage girl. His inner voice wishes to follow high ethical values which are the real foundations on which society is structured: "There were processes of history to which human beings contributed willy-nilly. He believed that an individual's conscious effort should be directed to immediate ends like saving life when endangered, preserving the social structure and honouring the conventions. His immediate problem was to save Muslim lives" (*Train to Pakistan* 145).

Cynicism is the pre-dominant mood in the novel that raises many questions about the ultimate destiny of an individual. The cogitations of Hukum Chand and the interior monologues of Iqbal raise many existential questions. These reflections take the novel to higher levels and transcend the immediate tribulations by posing the questions of individual destiny vis a vis that of the community. One wonders with Hukum Chand: What is the truth of life and death after all? V.T.Gridhari in his observations about Hukum Chand and Juggut Singh rightly suggests, "Sin is their share of life, hence the suffering. The process of introspection in the mind of Hukum Chand while with Huseena, young enough to be his daughter, shows him a better human being than all the immoralities and corruptions put together can show him as a brute. . . He suffers like Buddha at the sight of so much pain and suffering, decay and death" (Girdhari 83).

In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, we have Khushwant Singh once again preoccupied with ethics. Sabhrai is the best representative of the concept of "governmentality of the self". In any culture, the ethical and moral values are generally derived from one's religion. From her own culture Sabhrai has chosen Guru Granth Sahib as a guide, a counsellor, a friend, someone who will be truthful with you. For her, Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred source of all knowledge and enlightenment. In every culture, most of the "techniques of the self" are enshrined in the sacred texts of different religions. The people who adhere to those texts take their words as gospel truth.

For Sabhrai, simple ethical practices have become the usual way of life. This is natural or normalized way of life for her. She has an unswerving faith in the Guru Granth Sahib. For her, the ultimate model of a "man" was Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, who made a unique and unparalleled sacrifice for the sake of the nation. Being an embodiment of Feminine Principle, she respects the entire creation of the Creator. She does not like her son killing innocent birds: "I don't like this business of

killing poor harmless birds. If you ask my advice, I would say, sell the shot gun". She respects the laws of nature. The usual practice in a Sikh Gurudwara is to recite the hymns from *Barahmah* by Guru Arjan Dev on every *Sangrand*. However, she prefers to read the monthly hymns by Guru Nanak Dev in preference to those by Guru Arjan Dev because the hymns by Guru Nanak Dev are full of descriptions of nature. In the world full of moral midgets, Sabhrai is in pursuit of higher values.

Sabhrai's sincere devotion to Guru Granth Sahib and an abiding love for all is evident in the religious rituals she performs. Although she is not much educated, she has extraordinarily profound and instinctive understanding of life. In the Sikh culture, a woman is expected to respect her husband, keeping the blissful balance in the family. Sabhrai keeps up these long-cherished cultural values by performing duties assigned to her as a wife and a mother. In the family power relationships, a woman's life is structured round her husband, and her sons and daughters. Like a typical religious Sikh woman, she believes that '*pati is parmeshwaram*' and *pitru vakyam Janardanam*.Though her husband has no religious or spiritual pursuits, she like a typical devoted wife wishes to die in his arms. Having a hunch of her impendig death, she tells her husband, "I don't need a doctor. Let me go to my Guru with your blessings..." (*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, 233).

To begin with, Sabhrai seems to be a marginalized and submissive character, but by the end of the novel she occupies the central position in the narrative. Whereas Buta Singh and Sher Singh are obsessively argumentative, she is evasive yet effective in her ways. She is authoritative and can snub both her husband and her son, if and when the situation demands. Sabhrai is the best product of Sikh social, cultural and religious ethos. By following a righteous path, she attains certain saint-like qualities. She has rare intuition or sixth sense, with which people having deep religious convictions are said to be blessed. Her family believed that she had some sort of perception, which told her of events to come, the events having some bearing on her family. When Sher Singh is arrested on the charge murdering Numberdar Jhimma Singh, she is heartbroken yet she faces the challenge gallantly. Up to this time, she has been leading an ideal life according to the practices as are proposed, suggested and imposed upon her by her society and culture but now she transcends the usual human limitations. From "self-formation", she leads to "self-

fulfilment". She has a very crucial choice before her, given by the Deputy Commissioner: "If he is willing to give us the names of his accomplices, he will be made a Crown witness and be granted the King's pardon. If not, he must face the consequences of his act" (*Nightingale* 205). Her husband, Buta Singh, like a selfish father, only delves deep in self-pity. In such a predicament, she needs instruction, guidance, strength and consolation. Such peculiar solace cannot be had from any worldly source; it is possible to receive it only from some metaphysical fountain. When non-stop reading of Guru Granth Sahib for forty eight hours does not indicate the line of action as Sabhrai had expected, she decides to visit the Golden Temple where she continues making prayers throughout the night and having dips in the holy Sarovar. She remembers those testing times when the Sikhs had passed through great ordeals but their faith was never shattered. Getting inspiration from the Sikh history, she consolidates her trust and faith in prayers. She visualizes Guru Gobind Singh: "*There* was a man. He had lost all his four sons and refused to give into injustice. She was to lose only one. How had the Guru faced the loss of his children? . . . She was a Sikh; so was her son. Why did she ever have any doubts?... At last, there was peace in her soul" (*Nightingale* 229). She has scaled the blissful heights now and has raised herself above the bonds of this world. After the fetters are fallen, Sabhrai attains such objectivity that she is not very sentimental when she takes her son in a tight embrace. She level-headedly shares the Guru's orders with her son: "He said that my son had done wrong. But if he names the people who were with him he would be doing a greater wrong. He was no longer to be regarded as a Sikh and I were not to see his face again" (*Nightingale* 234).

I.K. Masih compares Sabhrai with Gorky's "Mother" in his famous novel, *Mother*: "She speaks like Gorky's mother and stands for pure motherhood which would accept everything for the sake of truth" (199). Darshana Trivedi compares her with Indumati in Kalidasa's *Raghuvansham*: "Her character is indeed an epitome of Indian womanhood. After the death of Indumati, Aj laments with deep sorrow and says:

Grahini, Sachiva Sakhi mitha:
Priya shishya lalit kala vidho!
Krunavimukhen mrutuna
Harta kim na me rutam

Alive or dead, she possesses a halo of unearthly brilliance around her. She does belong to the old world and has an antique dignity and charm about her. She can be easily identified with the well-known images of the mother which have been glorified in all ages and cultures. In the Sikh history, she can be compared with Mata Gujri who advised her grandsons to be indomitable when they were going to appear in the courts of Moghul emperors and later when they were bricked alive. She can be compared with Bibi Bhani, Mata Sundri and other such great mothers in Sikh history who considered integrity and ethics above all. She has known that "She alone is a wife true who loseth herself in the Lord". The English District Magistrate, John Taylor, too respects her without knowing her, "She has the dignity of an ancient people behind her. Without knowing her I have respect for her" (*ISNHTN*, 220). In an interview with M. L. Mehta, Khushwant Singh reveals, "Sabhrai is an idealistic vision of my mother, grandmother and mother-in-law, all three rolled in one".

The novel is replete with sermons and hymns from Guru Granth Sahib. The novel is set in 1942-43, from April to April. The month corresponding to April is Baisakh (generally, 13th of April is the Baisakhi day) and the last month is Phagun according to Hindu calendar. Out of twelve months, five months mentioned in the novel start with the hymns taken from Guru Nanak's Barahmah Tukhari . The hymns are so integral to the novel that it seems to be a religious novel. Out of these five, three are read by Sabhrai herself, one is read aloud to her by Shunno and fifth is read by Buta Singh after Sabhrai's death. The essence of these hymns is the quest of the Ultimate Truth and avoidance of sin. The hymns by Guru Nanak depict the atmosphere of that particular month, remind us to think about the surrounding ambience and to reflect about the creator, the Master, who is the ultimate truth.

The novel concentrates on marital fidelity, which is shown at stake in the modern age. The Sarus crane symbolizes the theme of love and fidelity. The killing of *Sarus* and thus separation of male and female instigated by Madan and practically caused by Sher Singh shows that both of them are insensitive to finer feelings of love. The recurring anguished human cry of the male Sarus in the beginning of the novel carries symbolic resonance throughout the novel. The religious sermons interspersing the whole of the novel speak of true relationships between wife and the Lord. These hymns are an integral part of the novel's sub-text. They repeatedly

remind the readers that today the human relationships are cracking and breaking down. Those who are in the process of keeping well-established pristine values are serving a great cause for their partners and also for the family. If governance of the self or governance of others is based on deep-rooted human values, the individuals, families, societies and the nations are expected to provide better conditions of living. The title of the novel itself is suggestive of an aesthetic loss rather than the materialistic or political one. The nightingale symbolizes the coming of spring (hinting at freedom in 1947) which unfortunately turned out to be full of intense agony and misery. In addition, it is the feeling of remorse of a mother who cherishes to see the realization of the dreams cherished by her only loving son but she would not have the opportunity because of the early death caused by the sacrifice. Yet at still higher level, it is the loss of pristine and antique ethical values.

Delhi: A Novel is a typical example of interplay of fiction and history, and of the present and the past, wherein the history of Delhi covering a period of about six hundred years has been put into the form of a novel. Focusing on selectively highlighted history of six hundred years from the time of Ghiasudin Balban to the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, leading to the massacre of the Sikhs, the novelist traces the portions of biographies of some kings and commoners who participated in the major historical forces and counter-forces that shaped the destiny of Delhi. It is really an insightful study to observe how religion has always remained the dominant discourse. Religion has been misused by the cunning and crafty politicians since centuries and this has never brought good results for Delhi or for the nation. Be it Taimur, Aurangzeb or Nadir Shah in the past or Mahatma Gandhi in the modern age, religion has been manipulated according to the wishes of the authoritative ones. Cruelties and calamities wielded on the minority by Moghul empires were justified in the name of religion. Religion is what in Foucauldian terms knowledge-power nexus is. The so-called religious people always present religion as something divine, something celestial. It is offered that religion is a metaphysical sentiment present in all individuals, containing the latent core. It builds up such an authoritative empire that it is almost impossible to revolt or build a parallel discourse against it.

According to Nietzsche this is a completely false history of religion, In fact, religion has no Ursprung it was a human Erfindung .

Religion was only made, it did not exist before. It was by some pure and obscure power relations that religion was invented.

Khushwant Singh, being a humanist is basically against any religious fundamentalism. He exhibits and highlights the havoc religion had been playing in the history of India. He presents the other side of these so-called "religious" kings in this novel. The chapter "Alice Aldwell" may not be an historical reality but it serves a great function in this historical fiction. Up to this chapter, the Mussulmans have been presenting their justifications about the historical happenings, but here we see how bestially they behave with a woman of white skin. During bad days, Alice was taken treacherously to the haveli ("mansion") of Nawab Abdulla where she was compelled to drink though these were Ramdan days. After that, she was chain raped by Abdullah and his friends. She was "like a piece of white meat fought over by two brown dogs: snarling, biting, clawing, shoving. So it went all through the long, long sultry night. . . . I was drenched with sweat and almost dead with exhaustion. By morning, Abdullah and his friends were drained of all the poisonous semen in their vile bodies (*Delhi* 258). This is the commentary on the people who feel proud of their religion and consider others infidels.

Though every narrator has some communal inclination yet the novelist lends a secular colour to his historicizing. Through a close reading of the various viewpoints, we come closer to know that his focus is on the ethical life which is the basis of every religion. Such ethics were promoted by the personalities like Nizamuddin, Sufi dervish of Giaspur, who does not "make any distinction between Muslims and Hindus as he considers both to be children of God" (*Delhi* 56). Nazimuddin symbolizes the brave who stand against the emperor to present the alternative discourse:

> Nazamuddin smiled and replied: O mighty Sultan, it is true that I do not make any distinction between Mussalmans and Hindus as I consider both to be the children of God. The ulema exhort Your Majesty in the name of the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) to destroy temples and slay infidels to gain merit in the eyes of Allah. I interpret the sacred law differently. I believe that the best way to serve God is through love of his creatures (*Delhi* 56).

To underline the importance of secularity, a full chapter has been

devoted to Mussadi Lal who can be the "point of view" of the novelist. Mussadi Lal has been a scribe in the courts of Ghiassudin Balban. He had lost his parents at an early age of thirteen and was left at the mercy of the Muslim rulers. Being dependent on Muslims, he has natural regard for them in spite of being a Hindu. It is worth noting that Mussadi Lal starts his story with the following appeal: "May Ishwar who is also Allah and Rama who is also Rahim bear witness that what I have written is true, that nothing has been concealed or omitted" (*Delhi* 50). Despite his best intentions, his secularity creates problems for him. He is taunted for being so, "At one place you are Musaddi Lal Kayastha, at another Shaikh Abdullah, some you greet with a Ram Ram, others with a salaam: with Muslims you bow towards the Kaaba; with the Hindus you kiss the penis of Shiva; one foot in a monastery, the other on your woman's charpoy. You get the best of both worlds" (*Delhi* 70). Mussadi narrates his pathetic condition: "I was disowned by the Hindus and shunned by my own wife. I was exploited by the Muslims who disdained my company. Indeed I was like a hijda who was neither one thing nor another but could be misused by everyone" (*Delhi* 51). The life of this new convert to Islam was saved by saint Nizamuddin who served as an umbrella for the secular people from the burning sun of Muslim bigotry and the downpour of Hindu contempt. Nizamuddin stood as a pillar of sanity amidst the prevalent frenzy of bigotry.

Mussadi along with his wife becomes Nizamuddin's disciple. Following the path paved by Nizamuddin, he tries to be a symbol of a human being who respects both the religions and tries to lead an equitable life. Mussadi Lal has a pragmatic approach and is rational in his thinking. He accepts defeat from the Moghuls. He reasons that when Mahmud of Ghazni had invaded Hindustan seventeen times and looted Somnath temple, nothing could be done by Hindus or by their gods. When the sea itself is said to prostrate at the feet of Somnath twice a day, why hadn't it done anything to save Somnath ji?

The novelist intentionally highlights those episodes which speak of secularity, amicability and uniformity. By highlighting the religious tolerance in the era of bigotry, the novelist wishes to remind the residents of Delhi of the great heritage Nizamuddin has bequeathed to Indians by preaching love for humanity. Rather than deriding Mussadi, the people should have given him due regards for giving equal respect to Ram as well

as Rahim. A similar example is set by a simple Sikh mercenary, Nihal Singh, who had joined the English army during the times of 1857. In a novel which is full of kings, queens, poets, commoners, *hijras*, prostitutes and down-bloomers, it is only Nihal Singh who stands apart because of his ethics and aesthetics. Through this character, the novelist seems to impress upon the readers that the Sikhs have been falsely misunderstood because of their "fungus around the chin" and "bandage around head" but that is not the whole truth. In an important episode in the novel, Nihal Singh frees a captive *jihadan* who was to be raped and then to be shot at. This Muslim prostitute-converted *jihadan* seeks permission to perform her *nimaz* before the act is done by three Sardars including Nihal Singh. After completion of Muslim prayer, the performer turns his/her head to the left and then to the right. This gesture symbolizes seeking bliss for those sitting on the left and the right. This is perhaps the singular example in the entire novel where respect is given to the other because of the religious sentiments. The gesture for the Muslim woman also cements the belief that peaceful coexistence is possible if the real essence of religion is followed.

Thus, one can easily discern the ethical consciousness which informs the three novels of Khushwant Singh, though he has been reviled for his too bold portrayal of the elemental human passions, and his affirmative stance springs from the constraints which the avocation of a writer entails.

NOTES

i. Husband is to be treated just like God.
ii. The words of the husband are just like the dictate from God.
iii. You were an ideal housewife, a rightful counselor, a true friend in solitude; in fine arts a favorable disciple, why did cruel death not snatch of mine while killing you?
iv. Name of the composition composed by the first Sikh Guru Guru Nanak Dev Ji, based on the tradition of writing poetry of separation of beloved from lover.
v. Origin.
vi. Invention.
vii. A large mansion.

viii. The ninth month of the Muslim year during which strict fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset.
ix. Hermaphrodite.
x. Female religious leader of Muslim religion.

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Assertion via Subversion: Transcending Framed Identities in Meena Kandasamy's Poetry

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Indian Women of the new generation writing poetry venture to mirror the anger, protest and disregard for the conventionally established gender-framed or caste-bound identities. The writing of angst and isolation seems to lapse into the grumble attic of the 'old' or older woman whose cry for freedom was labelled as madness. Those were the times of transition, as history tells us, from the age-old subordination of woman to the new sense of 'allowing' her to learn and earn and find her independence within the chalked patterns of house, home or community. All the great waves of first second or third and next feminism probably could help this transition-times evolve and reach up to the current positioning or 'space' for woman and now we do not certainly find ourselves talking of any more mad women in the attic, at least in urbanized areas of the globe; women have walked out of the front corridors of Patriarchal mansions and some of them even dare to whistle and hum a tune for declaring self-reliance.

The era of lost hope, aspirations and uncertainties seems to be replaced by self-created identity in the globalized human world but not in the world of domestic ties, ritualism of religion, norms of community or nation. Despite this progressive scenario in the metros and the towns, can we claim a secular, caste-free or humanist socio-cultural ethos around us? One need not pause to know the answer to such unending questions though we can gladly share the postures and posters of NGOs or WDC or other helping bodies that claim to eradicate the crisis from woman's life.

In their quest for self-discovery, women have to wade through the crisis encountered through a variety of tensions as they move from the old womanhood towards the new womanhood. Women's deviation from the tradition and revolt against their conventional role which was limited

to domesticity are not only feminine concerns but these are human concerns. Contemporary poetry evolves out of the layers of skepticism, opposition and criticism. Travelling the road of liberation from the ordeal of cultural banishment and disaffection to the utterance of individuality and independence, women poets in India have long suffered the abandon, condemnation and censure on account of their anti-patriarchy mode of expression.

With Kamala Das began the experimental subversion of hierarchies and gendered codes of identities in Indian poetry in English written by women. Kamala Das's candid examination of patriarchy and sexism, her deconstructive subversion of subtle essentialism in the contemporary socio-ethical structures was targeted at sensitizing criticism of 'female' existence as a biology-obsessed set of culturally defined paradigms.

Poets like Imtiaz Dharkar, Taslima Nasreen and Mamta Kalia further contributed sharply in de-structuring and de-contextualizing woman's life and being in the current socio-cultural Indian ethos. While Kamala Das and Imtiaz Dharkar highlighted woman's voyage from bondage and 'bandages' of tradition in patriarchy towards the longing for freedom, liberation and living as an individual which seemed like a feminist stance to a large extent, poets like Taslima Nasreen and Mamta Kalia centred their protest against the inter-related issues of women's living as individuals and being with or within the bonds and bondages with men, society, nation and the world at large.

Meena Kandasamy, poet, essayist, translator and activist, standing out from these rows and columns of the feminist protest or consciousness, cuts for herself a separate figure of an angry-young-woman preoccupied with the de-romanticized and 'provoked' woman's sarcastic interrogation into the hegemonic structures as well as regional and national spaces for women as both individuals and members of family, society or region. Remaking the frames of interpretation from a post-feminist and anti-caste perspective, Meena ventures to attack the academic language and patterned sensibility: "if you have some kind of sensibility towards injustice, you know what rage is" (Duarte Silvia 2010).

There is a two-way claim of woman's acceptance of her past image in contrast with its rejection, and a firm and confident assertion of her present as not so unnatural outcome of the traumatic past. Mira's

submission and legendary women's victimization becomes and have to become the glory of 'produced' insanity that includes writing poetry and staying alive. This graph of woman's existence from submission to missionarily subordinated admission and even to the subversion for the sake of assertion moves through intricate phases of acceptance and rejection, dependence and dejection, silence and sacrifice, articulation and affirmation, till it finally reaches the rising mode of assertion through subversion.

Meena Kandasamy strongly ventures to face the encounter with her lavishly triggered defiance that may look like intolerance of an extremist. Her exploratory sophistication and unprotected self-exhibition does not cut apart from the protest line of women poets and yet she advances in maturing through the womanist dignity of matriarchal perception of experience in love, and domestic life. Man's territory and woman's region of being and becoming are all geographically reflected in her decolonizing language.

Kamala Das in her preface to Meena Kandasamy's anthology of poetry admires the young courage of the poet in aesthetically cutting the slice of protest into the fabric of 'Indianness' and taking initiative in shouldering the responsibility of 'retelling' the grounded narratives and "the unkind myths of casts and perhaps of religion… dark cynicism of youth… Revelations come to her frequently and prophesies linger at her lips…" (Meena Kandasamy 2010).

The post-modern society may not grant woman a gender-free set of codes for her identity but it certainly cannot stop her from using her perceptive-expressive voice to revert, convert and subvert the structured patterns of living and defining life. The prerogatives of caste-class-gender-tied system are not granted to women like Kamala Das or Taslima Nasreen and the socio-ethical contractors of religion order and so on eagerly charge such poets with publicity tactic or populist activism in place of participating in or valuing opposition to the genuinely foregrounded issues. Meena Kandasamy too has been accused of attention mongering lingo or cosmetic protest and even her Dalit origin is doubted through the twitter-chatter blogging airs. Without getting discouraged by the threat-calls, criticism or accusations, Meena Kandasamy goes on dismantling the stereotypes with utter clarity:

> "Telling my story another way lets me forgive you. Twisting your story to the scariest extent allows me the liberty of trying to trust you. I work to not only get back at you, I actually fight to get back to myself" (Meena Kandasamy 2010).

The story must take its shape in the voice of the teller and patriarchy had all its beautiful stories proving the same not as a politics of narration but as the narrative of politics the politics of power, of gender, of religion and so on. The voice of the narrator does not thus simply shape the story but even re-shapes its inner and outer truth, form and elements through both the language uttered and the connotative semantics.

Meena Kandasamy's effort at clarifying the woman's need for the assertion of her identity through the subversion of stories around her, especially the decisively told and retold stories of women like Sita, Mira, Draupadi and so on, knows no barriers of public-image, fear of social opinion or law of ethical religious or judicial confinements. She declares:

> "I do not write into patriarchy. My Mariamma bays for blood. My Kali kills. My Draupadi strips. My Sita climbs on to a stranger's lap. All my women militate. They brave bombs, they belittle kings" (Meena Kandasamy 2010).

The fiery feminist voice of the earlier women poets matures into the firm-gripping militancy of Meena Kandasamy's 'words' whose language is not "man-made" because "it is beyond the white-hot rules of your seminal texts"(2010). Describing herself as "an angry young woman" though she knows the angry women are not glorified by the society rather they are labelled 'hysterics' or shut closed into the darker world of alienation as mad women in the attic.

In such a social conditioning women are made to fit into set patterns and frames; they are also groomed the way that they remain afraid of "ultra-intellectualizing". What Meena pleads for is the language that would convey the rage of the victims rather than the academic jargon of the lavishly interiorized drawing-room discussions amongst the so-called intellectuals or scholars. "I am no atheist", she declares, "I allow

everyone an existence….. I am unconventional, but when I choose to, I can carry tradition….That is why I am Mira, Andal and Akka Mahadevi all at once, spreading myself out like a feast, inviting the gods to enter my womb….like each of these women I have to write poetry to be heard, I have to turn insane to stay alive" (Meena Kandasamy 2010).

Echoing the loud activism against the cultural oppression of women Meena finds the 'Aggression' the ultimate way to claim power and autonomy for women, after the limits of silences and tolerance are crossed: "And the revolution happens because our dreams explode. Most of the time: Aggression is the best king of trouble-shooting" (2010). This is true to a large extent in India as the aggression of the minorities, the marginalized masses including women have to break the fences that are also weakening day by day. The marginalized communities consist broadly more than one third of the total Indian population.

In her sequential subversion of scriptural myths, religious narratives and socially institutionalized customs, the poet does not forget to touch upon the soul-searching question of spiritual oneness as she talks about the "Advaita" briefing in the columns of conceptual labels that contribute to bipolarize the so-wisely-sought 'oneness' on the spiritual path: Advaita

Non	Dualism
Atman	Self
Brahman	God
Are	Equal
And	Same.
So	I
Untouchable	Outcast
Am	God.
Will	You
Ever	Agree?

(Meena Kandasamy 2006)

The poem ends with a slapping question for those who preach duality in the name of socio-cultural or scriptural practices. If the souls of two discriminated species can unite to form the final one spirituality, why each caste would not merge into the 'other' without much ado? There are poems like 'Apologies for Living On" that deliver a sharp verdict on woman's abilities in the dehumanizing world of man and man-made

mores.

i am living on because providing apologies is easy
oncei was making choices
with insanely safe ideas of
fleeing-madly-and-flying-away
i was a helpless girl.....now
i am locked away....a terrified princess waiting
for-death-and-not-any-brave-prince
i don't dream or think...i just remember and wince
at-voices-of-the-past-smirking-in-sarcasm
once i ran away in the darkness.....
i ran into the arms of the ravishing night
nothing pulled me back: not even the memories...
i ran until terror stopped my tracks
for, trembling i turned and saw that the moon was
another-immodest-ogler-and-lecherous-stalker.

"Becoming a Brahmin" is another blunt poem that carries the satire to its heights as the "Algorithm for converting a shudra into a Brahmin" wherein she describes the conversion-recipe:

Step 1: Take a beautiful Shudra girl.
Step 2: Make her marry a Brahmin.
Step 3: Let her give birth to his female child.
Step 4: Let this child marry a Brahmin.
Step 5: Repeat steps 3-4 six times.
Step 6: Display the end product. It is a Brahmin.
End.

The poem "Their Daughters" is an auto-narrative of Meena's Asian blood and European skin-conscious origin that metaphorically conveys the hybrid legacy of every modern woman inheriting the sense of divided self:

"Their daughters"

Paracetamol legends I know
For rising fevers, as pain-relievers Of my people
father's father's mother's
Mother, dark lush hair caressing her ankles… deep-honey skin,
Amber eyes not beauty alone they say she married a man who
murdered thirteen men and one

Lonely summer afternoon her rice-white teeth tore
Through layers of khaki, and golden white skin to spill
The bloodied guts of a British soldier who tried to colonize her.
Of my landuniform blue open skies,
Mad-artist palettes of green lands and lily-filled lakes
that Mirror allnot peace or tranquil alone, he
shudderssome Young woman near my father's home,
with a drunken husband……Who never changed; she
bore his beatings every day until on one Stormy night,
in fury, she killed him by stomping his seed bags. . .We:
their daughters.We: the daughters of their soil. We,
mostly, write (Meena Kandasamy 2006).

Thus, writing is breathing for the women who suffer and choose to suffer courageously. Writing becomes a precondition to stay normal and to stay alive with the complete awareness of how "a carefully-constructed language that pushes you into a paralysis. Consequently, we languish as a society" (2006), Meena writes her poems only to spread the fire of rage and reaction to all the 'inflammable" spirits around her. After reading her poems one has to rethink about what parameters do we follow in standardizing the writing by women or even by men to a large extent, apart from the gender-based or caste-bound notions of identity and living in the socio-cultural set up like that of India.

Women's writings reveal a strong sense of isolation and distance imposed upon them by the socio-cultural and religious forces. They explore their journey in the past as isolated wanderers, suffering like the homeless despite their home-bound roles and existence, struggle of the misguided travelers on the path of freedom, pains of the alienated companions in the shared life-experience in their individual as well as familial world. Women writers do operate with a perspective broader than that of a community, nation, religion or culture. Being revolutionaries defying the expectations of society, they encounter the forces controlling or enslaving individuals. Women writers refuse to accept the patterns imposed upon women in general and writers in particular and articulate their individuality without fear.

Despite the endless story of how women are taught to accept the double heritage in the very family they have grown up to repeatedly

shoulder the burden of both the maternal and the paternal contexts, women have been fighting for their identity which is not premised solely on gender and caste considerations. Meena Alexander is no exception to the fighter women in the history of India and even the world at large.

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Envisioning Ecological Postcolonialism in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

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> The most alarming of all man's assault upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal material. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognised partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world the very nature of its life.
>
> (Carson, 23)

If one looks at the possible areas of intersection between postcolonial criticism and ecocriticism - the two relatively recent critical schools - one finds that, despite their obvious differences, they share similar concerns with the issues of social justice and redemptive transformation. Whether there is a polemical report on dams and displacement, a philosophical treatise on animal welfare and besieged nature, a narrative on a chemical/nuclear disaster and its victims or a fictional creation about waters and whales, there is something in common at the derivative level of significance. They all are legitimate objects for ecocritical study, both a critical method and an ethical discourse that "takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature" (Glotfelty, xix). With "one foot in nature and the other on land", ecocriticism is primarily a "study of the relationship between literature and physical environment", but its mandate also extends to the field of environmental philosophy and bioethics where, as a theoretical discourse, it "negotiates

between the human and the nonhuman (worlds)" (Glotfelty, xiii-xix). And it hardly matters whether the work under scrutiny originates from the creative consciousness of an Asian, South African, Scandinavian or a Western writer. Since each in its own way also articulates resistance to the anthropocentric tendencies of thought and value system of the dominating practices of imperialist or neo-colonialist regimes, it creates fertile grounds for a productive overlap between the generative principles of ecocriticism and those of postcolonial criticism. This possibility for a future alliance between the two critical/philosophical schools opens up new aesthetic horizons, as well offering food for political thought. It also works in part as mutual correctives: postcolonial criticism to the culture-blindness of certain strands of ecocriticism, and ecocriticism to the anthropocentric tendencies of postcolonial thought.

In his "Editor's Note" to the special 2007 issue of *ISLE* on postcolonial ecocriticism, Scott Slovic prefaces the issue with the plea: "Some might find the yoking together of ecocriticism and postcolonialism a bit of a stretch, but I hope this issue of ISLE … will help to show the value and necessity of this combination of perspectives" (vi). It suggests that by the end of 2007 there was still some hesitation surrounding this burgeoning field. In order to lend this intersection legitimacy, then, many scholars attempted a revisionist reading of postcolonial ecocriticism. They argued that there was nothing particularly new about postcolonial environmentalisms. Graham Huggan's earlier pronouncement in one of his articles entitled "Greening' Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives" that "postcolonial criticism has effectively renewed, rather than belatedly discovered, its commitment to the environment" (702) was reinforced by many critics who sought to underline that the ecocritical intervention into postcolonial studies represented a continuation, rather than an intervention, of environmentality in postcolonial thought and art. Recent critical works by social thinkers like Ramachandra Guha and ecofeminists like Vandana Shiva too lent weight to an existing foundation for culturally-conscious postcolonial ecocriticism. Critics like DeLoughrey and Cilano argued:

> "Postcolonial topics should not be viewed as entirely new directions in the field of ecocriticism as much as they represent increased visibility to a western-based

audience who is rethinking the limitations of US national frameworks that had excluded other perspectives. To suggest that postcolonial ecocriticism is new is to give a normative status to ecocriticism's institutional origins without questioning the limitations of its foundational methodologies and focus." (73)

Huggan and Tiffin extended the debate further by bringing into discussion the categories of nature, culture, human and non-human all together. "The very definition of 'humanity' indeed," they argued, "depended and still depends on the presence of the non-human, the uncivilized, the savage, the animal" (6). Their critique thus not only points to the specific origins of a particular environmental worldview, but anchors it in a postcolonial critique of power - speaking truth to power. "Green postcolonialism, however," they write, "is not just critical; it is also celebratory. Both postcolonialism and ecocriticism are, at least in part, utopian discourses aimed at providing conceptual possibilities for a material transformation of the world" since there can be "no social justice without environmental justice; and without social justice for all ecological beings no justice at all" (10).

Impelled by this nobility of vision in the face of bourgeoning onslaught of the neo-liberal "culture of materiality" or "culture of greed" during the last about two decades (Shiva, qtd. In *Hindu*), what we have come to witness in literary discourse is a definitive shift, not only in the Indian context but globally. A geographically wide ranging group of writer-activists working in diverse literary forms is espousing the causes of the environmentally dispossessed. These writer-activists like Arunadhati Roy, Vandana Shiva, Indra Sinha, Wangari Maathai, Ken Saro-Wiwa and many others have recorded the long-term inhabited catastrophical and corrosive impact of transnational neo-colonial agencies, including mega-dam industry, nuclear industry, patent regimes, petrochemical imperialism, the practice of shipping rich nations' toxic waste to poor nations' dumping grounds, tourism that threatens indigenous peoples, conservation practices that drive people off their native lands, environmental deregulation for commercial demands, and much more.

The strategies these writers adopt are as varied as their concerns. In *Animal's People* (2007) Indra Sinha gives a fictional account to

portray life of the victims of Bhopal disaster 20 years after the horrible event took place. His scurrilous, scheming narrator pours out lively, gritty, street-level stories about the urban underclass that inhabits the interminable aftermath, in a city where the poisons released by the chemical explosion still course through air, water, soil and bodies. Sinha makes an earnest attempt to reconfigure the environmental humanities by giving imaginative definition to a catastrophe that sadly has become imperceptible to the human senses, a catastrophe that may unfold across a time span that exceeds the instance of observation or even the life of the human observer. By contrast, Maathai's memoir, *Unbowed* (2006), offers an animated account of the successful struggle mounted by Kenyan women against deforestation, a struggle that involved 100,000 activists who planted 30 million trees. Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize for her Green Belt Movement which planted the seeds of peace, creating a vibrant civil-rights movement that linked environmental rights to women's rights, freedom of expression, and educational access. Others, like Arunadhati Roy and Vandana Shiva have associated themselves with the groups like India's 'Save the Narmada Movement' and 'organic farming' respectively. None of these writers, however, are committed to some narrow ideology, but are simply sorrowed or enraged by injustices and oppression. Most are restless, versatile writers ready to pit their energies against what Edward Said calls "the normalized quiet of unseen power (10)." I believe that the character of the biosphere will be shaped significantly in decades to come by the relationship between what Ramchandra Guha and Joan Martinez have called "full stomach" and empty belly" environmentalism (12).

Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People* specifically addresses the 1984 environmental crime committed by Union Carbide Industry in Bhopal, India. But by adopting the name Khaufpur as a fictional stand-in, Sinha extends the metaphor to mean a web of poisoned communities spread out across the global South. The implication is that Khaufpur could be almost anywhere. It can be any city whose residents are unfortunate victims of transnational 'toxic capitalism'. The book's narrator is a nineteen-year-old slum-dweller called Animal who lost his parents "that fucking night" that "no one in Khaufpur wants to remember, but nobody can forget" (*AP*, 1). He is now forced to "walk on all fours" due to the toxin-induced "smelting in [his] spine" (*AP*, 15). Like his real-life

counterpart, Sunil Kumar, he develops severe scoliosis: "When the smelting in my spine stopped the bones had twisted like a hairpin, the highest part of me was my arse" (*AP*, 15). He thereafter reclaims the name he is cruelly given by other children: "Animal." The novel, as its title suggests, narrates his engagement with the people of Khaufpur, who have also been adversely affected by the disaster, and who are now engaged in a heroic battle to make something out of their lives despite the continued poisoning of everything around them. At the centre of Animal's first-person narrative are also the tales of extraordinary courage of Zafar and his fellow activists to bring the fugitive American executives to court. Peripheral, yet no less important to this central conflict, are the efforts of the French missionary Ma Franci to minister to the survivors of the disaster; the humane interventions of an American doctor, Ellie, to set up a free health clinic in Khaufpur; Animal's own efforts to find food for himself and others, to assist in the fight against the company; and, the Australian journalist's efforts to extract a good story from one of the disaster's worst victims–"The really savage things," Animal explains, "the worst cases. People like me" (*AP*, 4).

Set around two decades after the Bhopal disaster, *Animal's People* conveys the fight of the survivors of this fictional 'city of terror' for justice against an unnamed 'Kampani'. Shedding sentimental narratives of pity, Animal offers a highly individual yet collectively responsive perspective on the disaster's aftereffects and accompanying notions of 'rights, law, justice' which he says 'are like shadows the moon makes in the Kampani's factory, always changing shape' and 'choking us' (*AP*, 3). Animal's distrust for legal discourses alludes to a context where one character is branded 'naive' for believing that 'justice is on our side' (*AP*, 34). Animal positions himself, as Rob Nixon observes, at "an angle to Khaufpur's environmental justice movement', reflecting 'picaresque' narrative methods for exposing the 'crimes that society's overlords commit and from which they are structurally exonerated" (45253). As the story moves forward, the narrative reveals the violence of the dominant platform of human existence in the contemporary neoliberal order, namely: the widening gap between rich and poor, the direct impact of ecological degradation on the poor, the corporate power and the crippled judicial system, of a philosophy of deregulation that ensure no intervention for the majority of inhabitants existing on the margins. Animal gives an apt expression to this

existential dilemma: "I've a choice to make, let's say it's between heaven and hell, my problem is knowing which is which. Such is the condition of this world that if a creature finds peace, it's just a rest before greater anguish" (*AP*, 11).

When the unnamed journalist, or "Jarnalis" as Animal calls him, arrives in Khaufpur with the intention of obtaining a disaster memoir for which he has already negotiated a book contract, Animal initially hesitates to tell his story: "Somewhere a bad thing happens, tears like rain in the wind, and look, here you come, drawn by the smell of blood. You have turned us Khaufpuris into storytellers, but always of the same story. Ous raat, cette nuit, that night, always that fucking night" (*AP*, 5). He even calls into question the role of and motives behind these narratives in general, attacking the orientalist, romanticised interest in stories of 'Third World' suffering: "You," and this of course also addresses the reader, "were like all the others, come to suck our stories from us, so strangers in far off countries can marvel there's so much pain in the world" (*AP*, 5).

Animal's decision to record his story after all, a decision he comes to despite the "awful idea" (*AP*, 7) of being probed by thousands of curious readers, is motivated by his desire to counter exoticist manoeuvers through misrepresentation. That is, if he is to adopt the role of good host to the Eyes that threaten to freeze him as an exotic object to be consumed, he will do it his way. He subsequently warns his readers: "I'm not clever like you. I can't make fancy rissoles of each word. Blue kingfishers won't suddenly fly out of my mouth. If you want my story, you'll have to put up with how I tell it" (*AP*, 2). He rightly recognizes that his words, their character decided in advance, will merely be co-opted in the name of rights, law and justice. In an inner monologue directed to the journalist, he explains: ""You will bleat like all the rest. You'll talk of rights, law, justice. Those words sound the same in my mouth as in yours but they don't mean the same [. . .] On that night it was poison, now it's words that are choking us" (*AP*, 3). Animal's telling, deceptively packaged in the form of a transcription, with "Tape" instead of "Chapter" headings, demonstrates his unwillingness to offer up the juicy, exotic titbits he imagines his readers expect to consume. Animal tells his impossible story in the bawdiest language possible and "talks straight" (*AP*, 10).). Although Animal directs his words to the journalist, they apply equally to the novel's

potential readers, who, to borrow the words of Graham Huggan, might unwittingly use exoticism as "the safety-net that supports these potentially dangerous transactions, as the regulating-mechanism that attempts to manoeuver difference back again to the same" (*The Postcolonial*, 22). Animal is aware of the political inadequacy of 'words' written about Khaufpur which, he insists, do more harm than good to the people of Khaufpur: "With what greed you looked about this place. I could feel your hunger. You'd devour everything. I watched you taking it in, the floor of earth, rough stone walls, dry dung cakes stacked near the hearth, smoke coiling in the air like a sardarji doing his hair" (*AP*, 4).

Confirming Gayatri Spivak's thesis that the subaltern's speech tends to be mediated by elite others, Animal appropriately projects himself into an endangered territory safely removed from culture. He explains on Tape One:

> The world of humans is meant to be viewed from eye level. Your eyes. Lift my head I'm staring into someone's crotch. Whole another world it's, below the waist. Believe me, I know which one hasn't washed his balls, I can smell pissy gussets and shitty backsides whose faint stenches don't carry to your nose, farts smell extra bad. (*AP*, 2)

In situating Animal on the extreme margin of the 'toxic capitalism', Sinha enables his protagonist to assert his difference from imagined readers, who, especially if they are American, would be hard pressed to aspire to his point of view. As Elli, the American doctor who comes to Khaufpur to establish a free health clinic, tells Animal: "I assure you that if you had been born in Amrika, you would not be running around on all fours" (*AP*, 140). Linked in terms of her nationality to the American company whose gross negligence led to a gas leak in its Khaufpur factory, Ellie's statement provides yet another reminder of the uneven power relations that separate Animal from rest of so called 'civilized world'. It is this sense of separation and hopelessness that discourages him from telling his story in the first place. "What am I to tell these eyes?" he asks himself in frustration, "What can I say that they will understand? Have

these thousands of eyes slept even one night in a place like this? Do these eyes shit on railway tracks? When was the last time these eyes had nothing to eat? These cuntish eyes, what do they know of our lives?" (*AP*, 8).

There seems to be the dialectic of accommodation and resistance at the level of 'unconscious' in everything that Animal says. He makes repeated invitations to his readers to share in his peculiar vision of the world, expressed in phrases such as "Eyes, I wish you could come with me into the factory" (*AP*, 29) and "Eyes, imagine you're in the factory with me" (*AP*, 30). Drawing on the reader-response theories of Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, Walter F. Veit suggests that "In the dialectic of appropriation and rejection we find the birthplace of self-consciousness and, at the same time, the locus of misunderstanding and it is in misunderstanding the other that the other is recognized as the other which does not want to be mistaken for a familiar being" (169). Animal's entire discourse pleads for a pressing need to be recognized as 'other', 'fringe'. His reclamation of the derogatory label "Animal" is part of this strategy and impresses upon his readers and fellow Khaufpuris alike the role difference plays in (mis)recognition: "Zafar and Farouq have this in common, I should cease thinking of myself as an animal and become human again. Well, maybe if I'm cured, otherwise I'll never do it and here's why, if I agree to be a human being, I'll also have to agree that I'm wrong-shaped and abnormal" (*AP*, 208).

But Animal is also aware that these stories are not going to affect any material change in his personal or collective reality. Rather many more are lining up to join him as unfortunate victims of this horrible spectacle: "We are the people of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us" (*AP*, 366). With this gloomy prophecy, Animal, the protagonist, concludes a series of tapes recorded for the Western journalist. But the novel is not concerned with the one catastrophe of Khaufpur which for the nun Ma Franci so strikingly resembles the Christian apocalypse. Tape five begins with a description of the 9/11 attacks on the US American World Trade Centre. Notably, for Animal, these events are the unreal, remote ones. "Fucking brilliant! Bollywallah special effects, forget it!" (*AP*, 60) is Animal's enthusiastic reaction not because he enjoys American suffering but because the youth of Khaufpur understands 'Amrika' only in filmic terms: "In Amrika bombs, explosions, buildings falling, such things are normal. I'm telling you, yaar, see Fight Club" (*AP*, 60). Ma Franci sees the

apocalypse begin in Khaufpur, but the Western readers, will surely rather connect this rhetoric to the American 9/11 and its aftermaths. By deconstructing the claims for totality of both narratives *Animal's People* hints at the necessity to accept a model of reality that allows for "increase in the vigilance, responsibility, and humility that accompany living in a world so newly, and differently, inhabited" (Wolfe, 47). It also implies the necessity of accepting the real incremental dangers of dismemberment of the entire societal and environmental edifice globally in the face of injustice and discrimination perpetuated by neo-colonial consumerist ethos of appropriating everything for profit, dismissing both man and nature as 'disposable entities'.

Animal's prophecy does not, in fact, allude to any ethical implications of such a reference to religious imagery. The writer probably uses the metaphor 'apokalis' as an instance of rupture which will ensure an emergence of what one can describe as a genuine postcolonial condition for living. Apocalypticism has been described as "a genre born out of crisis, designed to stiffen the resolve of an embattled community by dangling in front of a sudden and permanent release from its captivity . . . the consolation of the persecuted" (Thomson, 13-14). Thus, Animal turns the narrative of disaster into a bigger disaster which forces the question onto us whether we could be "Animal's People," too: are we the "Eyes" that stare their shallow humanist stare, or do we share the experience of the Apokalis? In fact, the entire narrative moves around the idea of catastrophe and the tension between the trope of survival and the eschatological idea of ultimate demise. Animal begins his story by stating that "I used to be human once," and the story ends with Animal's malapropism 'Apokalis' which also symbolises the event, the event that turned him into a 'disembodied' creature struggling for its own as well others' humanity.

Indra Sinha's protagonist shows his irreverence and anger at the so called sacred institution of religion which has failed to ensure a just society based on the sacred principles of compassion, peace and dignity for its people. Amimal asks: "Where was god the cunt when we needed him?" or, during a discussion with a once-famous singer: "'In Inglis', he says, "there is a word SILENT, which means khaamush, has the exact same letters as the word LISTEN. So open your ears and tell me, what can you hear?' I could hear nothing save a frog calling, [...] happily looking for

another frog to fuck" (*AP*, 48). This trust in the most elemental instincts of self-preservation and the negation of the exalted concepts of Divinity is indicative of the unsparing and contemptuous mood of the narrator. Most of the ecocritics, especially aligned to the concept of deep ecology, believe that it is this shift from the realization of the inner nature to the belief in outer gods that started the alienation of man from the essential life forces. They believe that Christian church culminated this process completely by its compromising stance and unholy alliance with the forces of rationalism, enlightened humanism and technological evolution. And it is this suicidal over-reliance on rational discourse and a constant evasion of nature, both external and internal, has caused the de-humanization of mankind in the present day Western civilization. Deep ecology "demands recognition of an intrinsic value in nature" (Garrard, 21) where everything from the human to the non-human is organically wedded together in a web, and is thus sane and sacred. Pandit Somraj's offers a similar lesson to Animal that the seemingly discordant croaks of frogs are collectively musical: "Animal, if you know how to listen you can hear music in everything" (*AP*, 49). When taken together, differences need not be interpreted as cacophonic; one need only actively listen to hear the harmony that differences make. Somraj elaborates on this idea:

> The notes of the scale are all really one note, which is sa. The singer's job is to sing sa, nothing else only sa, but sa is bent and twisted by this world and what's in it, by grief or longing, these things come in and introduce desires into sa, bending and deforming it, sending it higher or lower, and the result is what we call music.
>
> (*AP*, 249)

Affected by this speech and Somraj's gentle reminder that "there's music in all things" Animal concludes that "maybe there's even some kind of music to be had from potatoes and vultures" (*AP*, 250).

Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* makes it evidently clear that the real, material crisis is nothing but a consequence of a broader cultural crisis. Pollution has seeped into our culture in many areas and on various levels of representation. The dematerialisation of pollution has significant

cultural ramification, constituting a 'world risk society' of impalpable, ubiquitous material threats that are often in practice indissociable from their cultural elaborations. However, culture is not a monolithic entity. It is shaped by complex processes and practices. Sadly it has always been the subaltern and nonhuman whose voices are not heard. So our ecological thinking has to go together with an awareness of the discursive and power-related epistemological implications of such discourses, most notably in the postcolonial context and with regard to disasters such as the Bhopal/Khaufpur catastrophe. We, as readers, must account for the "colonial/imperial underpinning of environmental practices," that Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin point to, and engage with the "problem of unheard voices" (3). Nixon rightly terms it as the postcolonial "environmentalism of the poor" (462). Indra Sinha's protagonist, deformed Animal, may at one level serve as a "bodily shorthand for Khaufpur's transnational plight," but from a postcolonial perspective, "his posture is precisely that of a beast of burden" (Nixon, 450). However, it is his insistence to be "fierce and free" (*AP*, 366) that points to his quest to have a better patterns of living. It is humanist as a postcolonial ethical position but it is also posthumanist as it also "opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism" (Wolfe, xv). This aspect also gets reflected in good measure through the Khaufpuris' ongoing struggle for survival and justice even twenty years after the catastrophe.

Animal's People quite effectively negotiates the complex realities of ecological postcolonialism by engaging with the narratives of catastrophe. In addition to providing the readers insight into the material reality of apocalyptic disaster, Animal shares his animality with them, the Eyes that have seen and learned that there is complicity in telling stories just as there is complicity in neocolonial ecological and economic practices. Through the 'Animal' agency and the numerous other voices, the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals are deliberately blurred. Moving through the materialist, legal, religious, and toxic narratives, the reader imaginatively reaches the venue of disaster and adopts 'animal religion': "with us animals, our religion's eating, drinking, shitting, fucking, the basic stuff you do to survive" (*AP*, 88-9). The reader effectively becomes the 'Eyes' that Animal seeks to be seen with. Maybe it even provides means of learning to listen to those animals that have

nothing but "the gift of the gab" (*AP*, 26). The realist effect of this can be described as a form of 'transformative mimesis', that is, a postmodern engagement with the real. Underlying this 'transformative mimesis' is the urgent need for a cultural shift. What is suggestively proposed throughout the text is that we need to reinvent a 'culture of need' replacing the 'culture of greed,' and a new gaze of 'ecocentrism' replacing 'anthropocentrism'.

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An Insightful Display of Diaspora in Preeti Singh's *Circles of Silence*

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Preeti Singh, the valuable gifted writer, currently lives in Kuwait with her diplomat husband. Like all contemporary female writers she also has joined the race to give the readers the view of life perceived by female writers. This upcoming authoress has generated considerable ripples with her maiden novel *Circles of Silence.* The peripatetic course of Preeti Singh's life in the United States, Egypt, Afghanistan, India and Kuwait has helped her present a multidimensional view of life in her first venture. Though Nilanjana Roy (2002) feels "(t)o call Preeti Singh an emerging Indian writer might be taking things too far" yet her credentials as an engaging writer cannot be brushed aside. This editor of the Oxford University Press, New Delhi has contributed in the arena of articles, reviews and short stories to inch towards her own creative work. Her exposure to other nationalities and varied life styles has given her first hand exposure to the feeling of diaspora, a feeling of mixed losses at multiple scales. "Normally diaspora fiction lingers over alienation, loneliness, homelessness, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, questioning, protest and assertions and quest of identity; it also addresses issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures" (Jha 2006 97). This paper attempts to trace pangs of diaspora encompassing nostalgia, pain, rootlessness, stillness in life and a lingering desire to be embraced and accepted with warmth.

An unusual love story, embossed with seemingly inscrutable knots only to be resolved later on, revolves around Nalini, Rattan Nalini's lover and Husband of Tanvi, Tanvi the dead wife of Rattan. Story of Nalini, the daughter of an Indian Ambassador to Egypt, who drifts in the ocean of affairs to meet Rattan, a poor fellow caught in the cobweb of incidents, is revealed through inextricably intertwined threads of social norms. Immediately after Rattan and Tanvi's marriage when they are neither

strangers nor intimates, Tanvi gets murdered. Shocked and surprised, Rattan leaves the country only to meet Nalini in Egypt. Rattan, a lost soul after the mysterious death of his wife, feels not only isolation but great loss also because his sense of perception betrays him; his switch to another country in such state of disarray only adds to the intensity of the void coiled around him.

The characters (Rattan and Nalini), in their attempt to fight void collectively cling to fidelity, loyalty, care, and concern for each other. Rattan, betrayed by luck and his own mother, suffers tremendously only to care for Nalini, his beloved more tenderly, a feeling reciprocated by Nalini who though involved with Rattan outside the sanctity of marriage snubs the amorous advances of other males. Tanvi was married off to Rattan whereas Nalini embraces Rattan without marriage: "She resisted him a bit in the beginning, but that was because she felt that things were moving too fast, and she could not quite register or savour everything that was happening" (Singh 308). She does take time but does not recoil too long from the spontaneous indulgence of her body as she considers herself to a grown up woman with a right to seek her own happiness. Even the knowledge of Rattan's dubious past fails to unsettle her; keeping her faith intact in him, she nurtures their relationship and her faith in his innocence and helps him lead a fulfilling life. As Anees Jung puts it in *Unveiling India* that woman of India remains the source of strength to all: "She remains the still center, like the center in a potter's wheel, circling to create new forms, unfolding the continuity of a racial life, which in turn has enriched and helped her acquire a quality of concentration" (26). Likewise Nalini breaks the circles of silence encircling Rattan and infuses new vitality in his stagnant life.

Diverse reactions of the characters towards major upheavals in their lives unfold their varying sensibilities. When Pammi (Rattan's mother) and the driver Ram Singh murder Tanvi, they put on garbs to camouflage their true feelings. Contrary to the calculated and cold reaction to such a grievous piece of information is the composed and mature reaction of Nalini at the disclosure of Rattan's past. Sparing the sensibility and comfort of others, "'Please don't say anymore,' she said. 'We can talk about this later. Let's not make a scene here, please….' 'We do need to talk, but I don't think this is the place, or the time'" (394). Similarly Rattan easily gets perturbed by even slight disturbance of Nalini.

Dedication of Rattan's parents to business activities and phony social circle deprives their son of all emotional or psychological support, even during the crisis. Facilities fail to do the magic; when he goes abroad for studies, "more than his mother and father, Rattan missed the comforts of home, especially the cooking of Hari Ram, the family cook" (10). The emotional void, after the death of Tanvi, meets with the busy business schedule and atonement trips. In the absence of all deprivations, surprisingly Rattan never gets to enjoy his life.

Nalini, on the other hand, a confident and independent girl of the next generation, performs her duty as a surrogate mother with perfection. Organization of late night parties, study of the siblings, and errands of household never suffer because of her sincerity in the execution of her responsibilities, a trait that draws Rattan closer to her. Indubitably in the due course of time, she becomes Rattan's saviour.

> The female protagonists show an assertion of their rights as human beings and fight for equal treatment. Women writers wither writing in English in India, or writing in British Diaspora, present with insight the dilemmas women are facing. Liberal and unconventional ways of life are desired to avoid those problems within traditional society where self-willed and individualistic women often face suffering caused by broken relationships. Whilst there is much evidence of the alienation of vision and crisis of self-image, there is also an emphasis on an essential self. The characters possess a strong sense of self-identity (Hussain 55).

Nalini is a woman of extraordinary guts who prefers to put herself in the most ordinary way. Money and status get relegated for her and her partner, for Nalini and Rattan do not make a display of their money or position. Their sobriety provides a hinge to their morality. Caring for and sparing the sensitive feelings of others, Nalini and Rattan make an attempt to cover for the loss they have faced in their respective lives. The fear of losing each other keeps them together.

Imbibing the latitudinarian attitude, she is extremely tolerant of the festivals, activities, beliefs, clothes, etc. of other religion to which she

originally does not belong. Blurring the distinction between Hindus and Muslims, she gets along well with all not because she wants to show that she is a good lady but because she recognizes their worth as human beings. Though Nalini and her family live in Cairo and have a good circle of Indians, Nalini has no problem with any of her colleagues where most of them are Muslims. In fact, she faces no problem because of her being a Hindu. She gets along well with Gamal, Nayyara and others. Similarly, her interest in the festivals hinges on the celebration and being a part of that celebration though it fails to take the pain of deprivation away.

The description of the affair of Diwali given in wide coverage in a separate chapter "The Festival of Lights" in *Circles of Silence does focus on the lack of original flavour and embracing feel.* Nalini is quick to point out the placement of festivals in a foreign land, "'Outside the country, *Diwali* is always a holed-up affair,' said Nalini, regret in her voice. 'But we must make the best of it'" (233). Rattan, clinging to Nalini with all his force, seems to feel the vacuum with more intensity. "This sense of existential panic, of nomadic terror, which may take the form of an abstract homesickness (in the absence of an actual home) or the nausea of namelessness is not allayed but experienced with redoubled intensity by those who opt for a second displacement" (Mishra 2003 279). Rattan's attempt to see a connecting point to which he also belongs yield results but that sense of security remains constantly threatened.

Once away from one's own country, one feels the emotional and psychological distancing. To make an attempt to be near their land, people cling to their culture and social customs and mores. Rattan and Nalini have lost even their near and dear ones which has distanced them further from themselves. Normally, even people in India wear all types of dresses, on the other hand, Nalini, though living in foreign, does not wear these types of dresses; dressed in *sari* on formal occasions, she is otherwise shown in *salvar kameez*. The desire to be the part of her home and more quintessentially her mother has goaded her to dress in Indian attire though with full grace.

Probably, diaspora may weaken the spirits of the people due to innumerable distressing factors but Preeti Singh has gone one step ahead when she transforms her characters as plain human beings. Caught in imbroglio, the characters react differently to the societal needs and duties; goaded by the digressions, affected by the pressure of unavoidable

circumstances and taken aback by the uncertainty of events, the characters discover themselves also, a step not always in consonance with the established societal standards. Pammi, though shown as a dignified and strong lady, turns out to be a weak woman; Rattan is a weakling who hardly knows how to cope with the situation; Noni shuns the family responsibilities and prefers to remain away from the whole affair; and Nalini's father needs his daughter's help to run his house. Nalini is the only character that shows some grit; letting herself be the hub of the lives of all who come on contact with her, her powers symbolize her stature, though her sense of morality is not in consonance with traditional concepts. In fact, the peak sufferer is Rattan. A male, rich enough to let poverty and the standards of society meddle with his exhilaration, youthful enough to care a fig for the customs of society yet his sufferings are acute enough to take all the sap out of his life.

The unique feature of this novel is an unshaken faith in the spiritual powers of the native land. The characters have been uprooted and scattered to other parts of the world but Preeti Singh seems in no mood to compromise on the sublime quality of the spiritual power of the blessed souls of this pious place. In this modern story a niche is spared for fakir, his prophecy, and even veracity of his prophecy. Panna, the fakir, is given due importance and is not shown as a sham ascetic but a genuine one who predicts, '"Hmm. Good. It is a good baby… a good baby. But the birthmark on his shoulder is bad. Very bad. Hmm very bad,' he said. There was a pregnant pause. He continued in a voice low and ominous, 'His own will eat him up'" (6). Rattan, after his education abroad, his arrival back home, his marriage to a sweet girl, and the mysterious death of his wife, is surely eaten up by his own mother. No wonder, Panna, the fakir has prophesized it years ago but promised to set the things right, "'Yes. His own will eat him up… or at least, very nearly. And then he will survive. Yes, survive… Remind him, he should visit me when he is thirty-six years old. Write it down somewhere, so nobody forgets. He must come'" (6).

Taken aback by the destructive upheaval in the life of her son, when Pammi goes to Panna fakir he is quick to remind that she has destroyed her own son:

> Suddenly the fakir spoke. 'Aha, I remember now! So it has happened.'

… … …

'So why have you come?' said the fakir. 'What had to be, has been.'

… … …

'Hmm. So you destroyed him, born of your womb,' said the fakir, looking sadly into the distance.

… … …

'Leave everything. Whatever you had to do, you did. It is time for penance,' said the fakir suddenly, his voice loud in the silence (207).

As he prophesizes that things will settle down after a certain cataclysm, things do settle down after certain ups and downs. Nalini treads softly into his life and purges his life of all unwanted elements and burdens of past. This amalgamation of advancement and adherence to religious fervour is rarely seen in literary works and especially when it is shown in a positive light. Panna, the fakir, is blessed with the power of clairvoyance and whatever he asks Pammi to do is not fake, unrealistic, or for his own benefit but he guides her not to worsen the seemingly moribund situation by disclosing it to others. He emphasizes repentance and silence that really works. Ultimately it is the fakir who helps break the circles of silence, a step that infuses new vitality into the otherwise dragging lives of so many characters. Though they finally tend to reach a point of contentment yet they have had a fair share of sufferings. There seems to be no second opinion to the observation that "Diasporas, of course, refuse to die" (Mishra 2007 37).

To encapsulate, in *Circles of Silence* Preeti Singh has admirably attempted to add new and uncharted dimensions to enrich her virgin work. Her treatment of diaspora is relatively different, the characters are weak not because they are away from their land but because they lack in inherent values; the characters are strong not because they are in their native place but because they have learnt from life; isolation and separation affect the characters because of the unpleasant incidents in their lives; the desire to be embraced and cuddled does meet with and characters are allowed to shed the load of guilt. Failures and vacuum do affect them but not without making them much stronger to get up again and face the challenges of life. To add to the glitz, the much looked down

upon spirituality of India as sheer superstition, steers clear of all ifs and buts with perfect equanimity.

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Silence as an Extended Metaphor in the Delineation of Introspective Women

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Shashi Deshpande, a leading novelist of the feminist genre shows women as practical beings, possessing an urge to excel in their lives. Amidst the group of other writers, she stands out because of her adept handling of the intellectual aloofness experienced by the working woman during the course of her struggle to maintain her individuality. In her fiction, she has dealt with almost every issue raised by the women's movement in India regarding the subordination of women like rape, child abuse, son preference, denial of self expression, deep inequality, deep seated prejudice, violence both mental and physical, binds of domesticity, etc. In the words of Rani Dharker, "Deshpande, on the other hand, perhaps because she is writing from the periphery of India sounds more authentic, portraying as she does the middleclass Indian woman waging her ordinary life battles"(Quoted in Bharucha 113).

That Long Silence (1988) by the same author revolves around self-imposed silence, self-discovery and realisation about life's eternal truth. Jaya, the protagonist of this novel is a victim of oppression by her husband Mohan. He exploits her in a very subtle way as he never allows her to have a say in any matter. Her writing capacity is also suppressed by him just because he does not like the story written by her and he feels that it resembles their married life. Discouraged by her husband's attitude, Jaya stops writing as her marital life is more important to her.

Jaya has been a very expressive child as her father has been very encouraging and considerate regarding her education. Even after marriage, she tries to express herself freely. But when she terms her mother-in-law as a person whose whole life has been spent in serving her husband and children, Mohan does not like it. He feels that the characteristic he considers as very strong in her mother has been undermined by Jaya. After this, Jaya decides to maintain a self-imposed

silence to preserve the sanctity of marriage.

Jaya here represents the inherent silence of women. She never speaks openly in front of her husband as she feels that being a female, it's her duty to abide by her husband's wishes. Jaya is a woman who does not ask questions, because she has learnt early in her life that when women ask questions like, why, why this injustice, they would simply be wasteful exercises causing others discomfort as well as anger. Consequently, she loses the ability to express herself and chooses to be silent. She neither speaks freely nor retaliates in front of her husband. She readily agrees to whatever he says. Her husband keeps on reminding her that for a woman silence is very important.

Silence has been used as an extended metaphor by the author to depict the inherent silence of women. It has been highlighted not only by Jaya but also by other characters. Mohan's mother is the embodiment of silence as she has undergone traumatic existence without uttering a single word in her life. Her whole life has been spent under the dictates of her husband who never feels satisfied with anything she does, for instance whenever he does not like the food, he throws the food violently which clearly brings to the fore the terrible life she has been leading without any complaint. Her helplessness gets reflected as, "Silently watched by the children, she picked up the plate, cleaned the floor and the wall of the spattered food, and wiped it. Twice the girl pleaded, Avva let me do it" (36).

Vimla, Mohan's sister also exercises silence to keep her marriage intact. Despite being ill, she does not have the courage to communicate the same either to her husband or to her in-laws. The protagonist Jaya finds resemblance between their lives as she says, 'Yet I can see something in common between them, something that links the destinies of the two…the silence in which they died' (39).

Initially she was not that much silent but later on she forces herself to be so because her husband never sees expression as a positive trait for a woman. Her husband's annoyance when she terms her mother as a good cook gives her a shock. Jaya comes to know the power of her words on her husband. He cannot digest his wife's frank expression and gets shattered. Disturbed by her words, her husband stops talking to her and thus she decides to keep mum. She does all this to preserve the marital sanctity though deep inside she is aware of the lack of

compatibility and also the forced nature of their marriage. She blames here the social set up in which a woman is brought up to lead a life as dictated by the norms. She says that even her relatives have also been the sufferers for which they have been trained since their birth.

Moreover, Jaya is surprised at his narrow-minded thinking, that he sees strength in his mother's helplessness. Forced tolerance of her mother is highly appreciated by him. He says that a woman should not be angry, as anger makes a woman unwomanly. According to Jaya she has been a sufferer throughout her life as she has not only endured her worthless husband but also spent the crux of her life in drudgery, enduring unending pregnancies, "He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender."(36).

Initially, she used to do as desired by her husband. Her main concerns in life concentrated only on cooking and taking care of Mohan and the home. Suddenly a problem arises in Mohan's life, which shakes Jaya. Mohan is under suspicion of having done something dishonest, so he decides to hide for a while in Jaya's uncles flat in Dadar. Jaya leaves with her husband their posh Churchgate home and enters the simple Dadar flat. This phase proves to be a turning point for Jaya as due to this she suddenly wakes up to the kind of life she had been leading till then. Thus, she is propelled towards self-discovery.

Her unconscious step to ignore the extended hands of Mohan for the keys to the flat, and opening the door herself gives a severe blow to her relationship with Mohan. It is at that moment that Mohan's authority is shaken and Jaya starts reassuming control over her life. She starts analyzing her married life which according to her is a sham. Jaya's relationship with her husband is very superficial. He is a very indifferent person and does not give her much importance. Jaya's personhood can be best expressed in the words of Virginia Woolf in *A Room Of One's Own*, "There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind "(76).

Her husband has named her Suhasini after marriage. There is always a conflict between her two-fold identities. Suhasini is the subdued submissive wife of Mohan who is not able to express herself. On the other hand, Jaya possesses an urge but gets subdued in the domestic binds.

She has never enjoyed freedom in her married life, however, for all outsiders hers was a happy family. Her husband is in a top position and they have got two children and she is a good housewife and mother whose life centers around her family and her home.

Despite all these essential aspects of marital life, her married life is a farce, "A pair of bullocks yoked together" (8). It lacks expression, feelings and love. She has no role to play, her husband dictates her regarding everything. She feels strongly that the males enjoy all the privileges and the fate of woman is waiting.

She examines her seventeen years of marriage and thinks about her long silence. It is during the silent waiting in the first couple of days that Jaya discovers her actual position in their married life. Completely free as Mohan does not go to his office she starts analyzing her life. In her moments of introspection, she remembers her aunt Vanitamami who used to advise her regarding the indispensability of a husband, "Remember Jaya, a husband is like a sheltering tree" (167). Vanitamami's husband never paid attention to her, still she lives with him as she feels that being a male he is entitled to do anything he likes whereas she cannot. The intensity of her helplessness is such that in order to amuse herself, she keeps pets and she suggests the same to Jaya. Reminiscent, Jaya concludes that despite her dislike for such a suggestion, ironically she has done the same to keep her marriage intact. She discovers that in this process she has slowly given up her sense of being an individual and has moulded herself according to the needs and principles of Mohan. On the contrary, he has never attempted any sacrifice from his side. Simone De Beauvoir has said the same, "marriage subjugates and enslaves women, aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently towards death without questioning its purpose" (500).

An ambitious person, in the pursuit of his dream of success, he had neither the time nor inclination to understand his wife as a person. For instance, Jaya's creative talent is also curbed by him. He allows her to write stories of Sita, a weekly column but her action to write a story about a couple, a man who cannot reach out to his wife except through her body, upsets him. He cannot tolerate his wife's exercise of freedom. Jaya wins a prize for her story but even in her ecstatic moments, she realizes quickly that Mohan is upset. Mohan frankly criticizes her for writing that story, as he feels that his reputation will be ruined.

Convinced of her mistake, she stops writing. She comes to know that after marriage there is nothing left of her real self. She has to compromise at each and every step.

Security in marriage prompts her to endure everything. Thus, all through her seventeen years of marriage, she lives with her husband. However, the day Mohan leaves the flat and walks out, all her hopes get shattered. He does not return for days without any communication. Jaya waits feverishly for Mohan's return and in the search goes to the Church gate apartment but gets only disappointment. Her mental turmoil is so intense that she falls sick. Her neighbour Mukta, her daughter Nilima and the servant girl, Manda, nurture her back to health. During and after her illness, Jaya continuously thinks of her past deeds.

Through the process of thinking and writing down her thoughts, she traces her life back to her childhood. Through the disorderly, disordered sequence of events and nonevents that made up her life, she purges herself of her burdens. Her trust on her husband regarding providing her shelter turns out to be a mere illusion as her husband walks out without information. Hence, she continuously broods over her life and acquires the awareness. She attains realization that one should not be a dependent on others. This reflection marks a new beginning for her and she thinks of the words, "Yathecchasi tatha kuru - Do as you desire", (192) which Krishna tells Arjuna after giving him a sermon on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Jaya interprets Krishna's words as meaning, "I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice. The choice is yours. Do as you desire" (192).

Now she learns to break the long silence, which she has endured for so many years without a breach. Her husband has left, she is alone now. She receives a telegram from her husband that all is well and he will be returning soon. The arrival of the telegram at this moment does not matter to her as she has acquired independence as well as the courage to take the action. No more dependent on her husband, she learns to communicate and emerges as an independent writer. By the time Jaya has finished writing down her life, she is ready to face life anew with Mohan. Michael Rosenthal's statement in *Virginia Woolf* regarding Mrs. Ramsay and Lily can be extended to include Jaya and Bimla as well, "What unites… them, despite their vast personal differences, however, is their mutual reverence for life and their desire to make something ordered and whole

out of the flux around them"(113).

She decides to speak and to listen, to expunge the silence that was between her and Mohan, between them and the children. Jaya understands that life has to be made possible. That brings Shashi Deshpande closer to what Elaine Showalter calls the third stage in women's literary history:

> First, there is a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles. Second there is a phase of protest against there standards and values, including a demand for autonomy. Finally, there is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. (13).

To sum up, the difference in Shashi Deshpande and other writers is that the heroines of her novels do not leave their families. On the other hand, in their quest to affirm their newly acquired independence, they live with the same family but with new insights and fresh opinion about the world, not as ignorant individuals but informed intellectuals. Bhatnagar opines in the same vein, "Shashi Deshpande makes her heroines choose security through reconciliation. The ethos in the novel is neither of victory nor of defeat, but of harmony and understanding between two opposing ideals and conflicting selves. This is quite representative of the basic Indian attitude" (128).

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Theme of Escape and Self-Transcendence in Nergis Dalal's *The Inner Door* and Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

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Spiritualism has contributed significantly to the more generalized New-Age movement. Mystical consciousness (the awareness of the undifferentiated unity of all, the experience of not perceiving any boundaries or divisions ultimately existing between anything); is the principle which the great religious traditions of India have at their centre. Mysticism transcends the rational, intellectual mind to a state where words, thoughts and ideas exist only as surface forms of a deeper consciousness. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Buddhist scriptures agree that it is impossible to describe accurately the mystical state because it is a level of consciousness which is different from the level of consciousness in which humans normally operate.

Women writers such as Kiran Desai and Nergis Dalal have dealt with the theme of introverted mysticism in their individual unique style. Nergis Dalal's *The Inner Door* highlights and strengthens our faith in Indian Philosophy against the background of inner consciousness, theory of karma, moral strength, eternal bliss and ultimate nirvana of the protagonist, who is an alienated, dislocated individual, enmeshed in complicated and determinate human relationships. On the other hand Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* written in a lighter, comic vein, too, has a central message of a dislocated youth finally turning away from the empirical states of consciousness to move into the higher realms of mystic consciousness.

This paper proposes to probe into the metaphysical moorings of a man's psyche and seeks plausible reasons of his disenchantment with the

material world. *The Inner Door* has the guide motif of enforced sainthood and is also an honest attempt to face the crucial question of identity. Nergis Dalal's novel stresses the need for self-discovery and self-identity, which has become an archetype in post-feminist literature. In the impersonal and threatening social milieu, she portrays an alienated individual's odyssey for attaining integration of the self by either assimilating or discarding social values of the community. *The Inner Door* also deals with intuitive feeling, a vision and a revelation of an ascent through spiritual planes. It has for its theme the transformation of an apparently ordinary man into an extraordinary self-realized soul. It is the saga of a young man who masquerades as a yogi for sometime but is eventually impelled to throw away the mask and set out in quest of the real and the eternal. The protagonist, Rahul, starts as a spurious swami but ends up as a genuine guru.

Again, Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* offers a unique plot, a unique hero and a unique subject matter. The witty author presents a dim-witted young man-turned 'Baba' of unfathomable wisdom, perched on a guava tree, doling out one-liners, pregnant with sagely advice for the devotees who throng to his unique worship seat. While *The Inner Door* is contemplative and reflective by nature; the treatment of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is both satirical and comical.

Though Desai's hero, Sampath, is not particularly a reflective and pensive young man ordained and committed to a higher vision of life, yet he, too, like Dalal's hero, leaves behind name, fame and wealth and moves to the mountains. While the spiritual leanings of Rahul in *The Inner Door* are quite obvious, for Sampath, moving out of his home is simply to avoid the rebukes he receives in abundance at the hands of his father; yet his final rejection of family and home is owing to a strange desire to be free. It is worthwhile to note that fed up of a claustrophobic existence and failing to measure up to the expectations of his family and the society at large, weighs too heavily on him, thereby forcing him to take the extreme step.

Rahul, the young protagonist of *The Inner Door*, is on his way to Rishikesh, along with his widowed mother, to meet his maternal uncle, Swami Jagdish, who runs a yogic ashram there. On his way, he meets the American couple, Chris Stuart and Myra, who decide to use Rahul for their own commercial advancement. Rahul and his mother fall for the lure of easy money; and Rahul, after an initial training in yoga and meditation is

re-christened Swami Sukhanand. His ashram is an ultra-modern piece of architecture boasting of modern amenities like posh accommodation, liquour, non-vegetarian food and to top it all, the provision of sex. Crowds throng to learn yoga and Guru Sukhanand proves to be a good teacher. Soon Rahul begins to roll in money and all his material desires seem to be satiated.

However, a gradual change begins to overcome Rahul. "Rahul discovered his own method of inducing into his consciousness, the intensity moment. He was left in a state of psychic emptiness, which was then filled by revelation and a new spiritual certainty" (Dalal 85). Material entrapments fail to excite him and meditation seems to bring upon an inner calm in Rahul's being. As the protagonist "reaches higher states of consciousness, the river, the sky and the temples around, become for him, a series of vibrations"(Javalgi 55). His love for the hordes of monkeys and compassion for beggars and all living creatures becomes manifest. Rahul begins to slip into higher spiritual planes. He has begun a journey towards the "corridors of light, where the hours are suns, endless and singing" ("Stephen Spender"). Mysticism makes him transcend the rational, intellectual mind to a state where words, thoughts and ideas exist only as surface forms of a deeper consciousness. Meanwhile, crowds throng the ashram to seek admission, since the word has spread that Swami Sukhanand performs miracles, reads the thoughts of people with a mere look at their countenances and also exhibits great spiritual prowess. Ironically his own mother, his uncle and the Stuarts fail to recognise the transition of Rahul from a fake guru into a genuine yogi. For them, Rahul's spiritual acts are acting. Just as "all little pools and rivulets and streams that collected so quickly after a shower and were now evaporating into the fierce sunshine", so also, all puddles of murkiness and dilemma disappear from the heart of Rahul (Dalal 33). He slips into another zone, another time, where nobody has an access to visit; they can merely see the vision, the gleam. But sadly, the lesser mortals fail to discern this unique transition of Rahul. He undergoes a self-transcendence and renounces all material desires; thereby moving to the peace and solitude of the mountains for spiritual attainment.

D. R. Sharma views the subtle transformation of Rahul as the core of the novel. "The theme of self-transcendence is the heart of the novel. Another way to put it would be to call the novel a study in

temptation and release- temptation of fame and wealth and the release from these quotidian, satanic concerns" (Sharma 141). The Stuarts admittedly come for spiritual enlightenment but they stoop to material ambition with Rahul as the tool in their enterprise. They have invested much but eventually lose everything. On the contrary, Rahul, who was earlier consumed with mundane desires, ultimately takes to spiritualism.

The protagonist of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Sampath, is a dim-witted young man, who in some ways can be identified to many young men who are at the crossroads of their life, who are deficient in ambition, and have not set their eyes on any lucrative office. The established structures of family and society are responsible to a great extent in driving many common men to the point of extreme frustration, often resulting in suicide, drinking, hypertension and in some cases, in their turning a recluse. Sampath appears to be such a character who is bogged down by the weight of his father's ambition for him. And when he can take no more, he disappears into the waiting calm environs of the higher mountain reaches without a final farewell or adieu. All he has to say is, "I want my freedom" (Desai 46-47).

Henceforth, begins Sampath's journey- for greener, wider spaces, far away from the humdrum of the noisy, busy life of Shahkot. Clearly, his journey is not an outcome of some serious inspiration, or a grave motive, but is a flat rejection of the world, which is too keen to make him responsible and docile enough to measure up to their acceptable standards.

> He had thought of snakes that leave the withered rags of their old skins behind … of insects that crack pods and clay shells that struggle from the warm blindness of silk and membrane to be lost in enormous skies. He thought of how he was leaving the world, a world that made its endless revolutions towards nothing … Somehow, somewhere, he had found a crack
>
> (Desai 48).

A large, magnificent tree in a guava orchard situated on the periphery of Shahkot, catches the fascination of Sampath, who perches on it and contemplates leading a peaceful existence there. But the arrival of a

quiet man, sitting silently on a tree is enough for the gullible masses to throng to him and proclaim him as the 'tree baba'. Ironically, wanting some peace and hoping to drive away the crowds, Sampath begins to reveal secrets of the people of Shahkot (secrets he had learnt due to his hateful habit of reading people's letters while working as a clerk in the post office). These discoveries make people widen their eyes who begin to believe in his miraculous spiritual prowess. Thus, is spelt, the future of Sampath as a great seer, "a remarkable man, who had known all sorts of things" (Desai 66).

After the initial euphoria of becoming inadvertently important dies down; Sampath gets tired of the chaos all around. The rush of the devotees, the marketing of spirituality by his father, the hooligan monkeys trying to steal the 'prasada', the idea to get Sampath down from the tree abode and set him in a temple weigh heavily now and Sampath feels this was not why he had come to the orchard and this was not the peace and solitude he had always craved for. He was being trampled upon by people who were "invading him, claiming him, polluting the air about him … He felt sick" (Desai 166-67). A unique metamorphosis takes place. Sampath, who had never uttered a word of sense all his life, begins to connect to nature and the simians surrounding him. He thinks profoundly of the ephemeral, changing seasons, passing years, making of memories and of the unknown future. He lies awake, lost in another world, staring up the "distant mountains", the "sylvan slopes", the cascading waterfalls, where "there were no villages, no houses, no people … just sunlit forest and rock and the living rough white water" (Desai 185). Wearing a desperate, hunted look, he feels jealous of birds that fluttered freely over snow-capped peaks with nothing to bind them. He renounces the world of hullabaloo and moves to higher and serene landscapes, unforaged by human habitation.

Just as Dalal's hero, Rahul, relinquishes everything, so also Desai's hero, Sampath renounces the material world. Reason and logic appear inappropriate tools for describing the strange transition from material entrapments to spiritual attainment. Obviously, there are more things in this world than science and reason can account for. Thus, Rahul, who is trained to pretend as having powers with which "he can open the inner door for the rich foreigners, most surprisingly has opened the door for himself" (Murty 87-88). Again, Sampath can find hymns and sermons

in stones, a philosopher, guide and friend in nature, a warm comradeship with simians, but cannot connect to his own fraternity. He can converse with the flora and the fauna, can feel for them and comprehend them, but fails to co-exist in a world too full of humans and human voices. While Rahul transcends his earlier mundane existence; Sampath escapes from the dull, futile living norms and the claustrophobic paradigms of the society and seeks refuge in the abode of the bounties of mother earth.

Both Rahul and Sampath are a faint echo of Raju in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*. Rahul is transformed from a tourist guide to a spiritual guide just as Raju, who is earlier content with the role of a holy man thrust upon him, later unselfishly and with great danger to his life, fasts to wipe out the drought and finally collapses, feeling rain falling in the hillside. So also, Rahul wipes out the facade and mask of a fake fakir and is strangely transformed. An actual saint replaces the guise of a yogi; and yoga becomes a way of life for him. Sampath being mistaken for a holy man also reminds the reader of how Raju in R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* is mistook as a holy man by Velan, a villager. But while the latter is initially satisfied by the arrangement and readily agrees to play up to the act; Sampath is reluctant to act as a godman, since, there is no vile thought in his mind. He is wary of people and cannot put up with too much interference from the human species.

Nergis Dalal's Rahul (*The Inner Door*) is a man forced to conform to social parameters and is compelled to earn by hook or by crook to support his widowed mother and himself. The American couple he meets, his own mother and his uncle; all seem too ready to corrupt him and none is concerned about the tainting of his pure soul. Rahul cracks under their pressure initially only to seek release later. Along the same lines is Kiran Desai's hero Sampath (*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*) who is in a rare communion with nature but is sadly underestimated by his family and the society at large. He is ridiculed and pushed into the material world and its tangles- pushed into a job and an attempted wedlock. Apparently there are no takers for his particularity, which is seen as insanity by all. Both Rahul and Sampath are so disenchanted with the world that they give it up without any remorse. While Rahul actually chooses the path of the greater glory of God, Sampath does so for his unique penchant for the flora and the fauna; and of course, a particular dislike for the human class.

Both the texts *The Inner Door* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* explore the theme of escape and self-transcendence wherein both the protagonists embark upon an inward journey. The treatment of theme by both the writers may be different, but ultimately, both celebrate the idea of renunciation and release. Rahul and Sampath exist in a state of suspended distance from the factual world. The pursuit of an individual meaning begins for both of them after a series of particularly insightful moments. The reasons for their increasing disenchantment with the world and their subsequent renunciation of the same make more of an existential and metaphysical study. Dalal and Desai exhibit a rare integration of thought in the themes of their chosen texts-Inner freedom and awakening are greater realities than immediate, primordial ones. Though the idea of escape may be puerile and vain to many, yet, the fact remains that the inner being will not necessarily be confined to the measure of some finite doctrine. The soul will articulate a path for deliverance.

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Connections and Ties in the Selected Poems of Sujata Bhatt

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Born in Ahmedabad and brought up in the USA, the poet Sujata Bhatt lives in Germany with her husband and daughter. Her poetry has been widely appreciated world over. Her anthologies are *Brunizem* (1988), *Monkey Shadows* (1991), *The Stinking Rose* (1995), *Point No Point* (1997), *Augatora* (2000), *The Colour of Solitude* (2002), *Pure Lizard* (2008). She grapples with her identity as a coloured woman who is an exile. She records her diasporic, racial and feminine experiences through a translation from physicality and collectivity of existence into a more emotional and subjective understanding of it. She understands her experiences of being essentialized, prejudiced against, and colonized while being a part of a totality, a larger society that shares her experience.

The woman experience, the experience of migration and her several attempts to return to the homeland are the most visible strains in Bhatt's poetry. She is lost in the complexities of human life, the routes it has taken from sub-Saharan Africa to the rest of the world, and the emotional trials humans must face on their way to nowhere.

The realization that somehow there is some solidarity everywhere, is crucial to the understanding of Bhatt's poetry. She is never alone even in the writing of poetry which is quite casually considered a very personal experience. She does not undergo the processes of the formation of subjectivity alone. There is always an exteriority that not only flows with her but makes her a part of itself. She is a part of a system that creates subordinate subjects but she becomes an agent through ties of solidarity.

It is worthwhile to understand the foundational basis of solidarity to fully grasp the various detours that Bhatt's work takes. Solidarity is a move to go beyond the self and identify with the non-self. At the level of subjectivity it is a slipping into domains that were extra-personal to

enlarge the meanings of one's self. The foundations of solidarity, therefore, do not strictly demand an outgoing act for achieving the exteriority, but are inward-looking as well because they try to enlarge the meaning of the self:

> The self and its identifications constitute the foundation for feelings of solidarity. The continuum of self and its identifications can be seen as moving from 'I' to 'All'. The most narrow category is referred to as *selfinterest*, but, even here, the self is seldom completely isolated and identifies with a restricted group sharing some common interest. (Stjerno, 16)

Solidarity has evolved as a concept from the times of Durkheim and Comte to the present times:

> Contemporary solidarity is different from what it has been in earlier times. Broad societal changes have had an impact on the forms and manifestations of solidarity: the individualization process, the decline of religiosity in Western societies, …. changing gender roles, the development of the information and communication technology, and, last but not least, the migration processes occurring throughout the world.
>
> (Komter, 169)

There is a weakening of ties in the modern western world, which is a far cry from the traditional systems of belonging like the family and neighbourhood. However, this is because in the present world there are many other options for making connections, and an exposure to multifarious meaning-making processes. Bhatt makes ties in the confusion of the postmodern world with Ramanujan, unconsciously, impulsively and almost telepathically, hence becoming a part of his consciousness:

I hunted out my favourite lines/ not knowing that all the time/ you lay in hospital./ Not knowing why/ I had this sudden craving/ for your words. (www.tumblr.com) Solidarity and belongingness while being discussed here in the light of emancipation and agency of the subject, are

almost antonyms to the idea of freedom in another sense. "Ties" is a more positive term than some other words like "chains" and "binds" that share almost the same connotations and it must be clarified as to how the term "ties" has more positive nuances. The word "ties" is used more positively in the sense of connectedness. The idea of connectedness is a life-jacket (and not a straight-jacket) because some form of connection with the outside is essential for making the inner psychological connection. Solidarity, works from the exteriority for the fulfillment of internal psychological needs by extending one's horizon and allowing the individual to cross into the collective.

Sujata Bhatt's poetry has myriad hues because she ceases to be simply an individual and understands herself as being part of larger systems which include feminists, poets and migrants. Her poetry is feminist but also diasporic. She jostles with questions of identity as a woman and a migrant, but also as a human strewn amidst the ongoing processes of the universe.

Bhatt experiences the absurd processes of the universe in the form of "telepathy" and "second-sight" in her poem "Fate". Telepathy is instinctual, and hence also the generalizing feature of existence. It is an instinct that is shared with a wider species and hence is a thread that unifies it. "Fate" is a remembrance of A.K. Ramanujan, and yet is more than a simple elegy. It unravels universal mysteries. Bhatt does not stand alone as a poet but is connected to the several other authors of Indian origin. She is a part of a web and her poetry exists through a network of other poems by other authors. It is essentially inter-textual. To understand one's personal experience, one cannot segregate it from the experiences of others. Individual experiences can only be fathomed in the larger histories and stories of others around us.

Bhatt and Ramanujan are connected as poets of Indian origin. They share its memory of glory and the history of intrusion and oppression. They are connected as subalterns and the master words "woman" and "man" are consigned to some extent because both the poets are colonized and diasporic. Bhatt is bound to Ramanujan as a poet, but also in the sense of being oppressed. They are both migrants and therefore share a part of their experiential world, even though they reside in different continents. They live in intersections because there is no single section of the world that is purely their location. Their sharing is a move

towards solidarity which goes a long way in making them agents.

They share the river Ganga, its course and fate, ironically by not sharing it, by not being a direct part of its location: *"You were still in Chicago,/ I in Bremen, and the Ganga still flows/ dirty and oblivious."*(Bhatt, po/i-tre blog) Bhatt refers to water as a life force. The thread-like Ganga on the Indian map is a taker to the ocean, a flayer of sin, a carrier of the impure and a retreat for religion, tourism and ideologies.

The Ganga, considered a female force in the Indian context is a symbol of the motherland. It is a life-force on which the agrarian economy of the north Indian states depends and hence, it becomes a decisive, active, outgoing agent in shaping the future of the nation. The Ganga is symbolic of the wilderness, the no man's land or the women's sphere that was emphasized by Ardener:

> Unlike the Victorian model of complementary spheres, Ardener's groups are represented by intersecting circles. Much of muted circle Y falls within the boundaries of dominant circle X; there is also a crescent of Y which is outside the dominant boundary and therefore (in Ardener's terminology) 'wild'. We can think of the 'wild zone' of women's culture spatially, experientially, or metaphysically. (Showalter, ed, DeShazer, 367)

In her feminist poem "She is in Her Green Dress", Bhatt enters intersections between women and nature, and hence this poem too is a response to oppression. The poem takes on a larger meaning though, with its eco-critical perspective. It comes from the need for renaissance, and maybe a Bastille is hidden in the woman's last walk out of the leaves. Her firm reef of observations is laced by an ocean of uncertainty and confusion. This is the balance in her poetry. In an equalizing sweep, she merges the background and the foreground:

> In her green dress,/ she is the background and foreground / A green dress the colour/ of iris stems,/ the ones in the background / A green dress / the colour of iris stems against grass/ Green on green on green /

> She is the foreground/ and the background (Bhatt, tumblr blog)

Nothing stands out in her poem; it is in a way an affirmation of equality. When there is no background or foreground, there are no limits or divisions, and the centre, too, has been made defunct. The poem is like a dream that sees the ideal. The poetess soaks down binaries in the thin tissue of her thought and in a romantic, equalizing sweep eradicates subalternity. At the level of feminist eco-criticism, the poem also synchronizes women with nature. Green, in a world making a lot of hue and cry for the environment, is metonymous with nature. When the woman in the poem wears a green dress, she actually steps not only into a Wordsworthian scene, but into the chlorophyll itself. She derives nutrition from it and becomes autotrophic. When she becomes a part of the original life processes in natural evolution, she becomes both historically significant and self sufficient. She finds solidarity with nature and identifies with it to deal with a common adversary as have several eco-feminists:

> Our Judeo-Christian heritage… constructed men as responsible and rational and women as their more 'natural' but less rational and therefore inferior opposite. This has led some eco-feminists to identify rationality itself as primarily responsible for our environmental crisis and to adopt a wilfully anti-rational, mystical approach to the natural world. (Bertens, 205)

When the poet converses with a bird, she knows its language and in a sense knows the language of freedom. In another sense, the bird is the link between the immensity of nature and minuteness of human life. The poet's struggle with her weakness does not just happen. It is a conscious effort. She does not just hear, but listens. She becomes an agent, as against merely being an enactor of the given script.

Then suddenly, nature also becomes a post-"original sin", and a post- Garden of Eden ordeal of labour. The heat suddenly sprouts. Heat in the Indian context is a symbol of anguish, but is generally also

metonymous with prolific growth. Eventually, the free woman is born from the heat. She comes out of the womb of nature that has nurtured her to strength. She has become an agent. The liberated woman stands ready to face the ordeal that the heat is, in the hottest month in north Indian climate; there are purple clouds in the sky South Asian hope in an unusual hue. The end of this poem is in the future tense and is an envisioning of hope and agency:

> It is June: Full of Humid Shadows,/ purple clouds it will rain/ in an hour. The irises will sway/ in the wind a few stems will/ get bent by the rain broken / and her green dress will get drenched along/ with the grass/ where the stems will lie/ broken / But she will walk away/ laughing she will walk slowly/ lingering in the green wetness (Bhatt, Tumblr blog)

In her poem "from Search for My Tongue", Bhatt's focus is on language as a part of identity and on the ordeals that a subaltern must face to come to terms with her migrant, and marginalized self. Language, though a social phenomenon is also very personal, in not only that it is idiosyncratic and we possess a personal language register, but also in that that language is a construct of one's identity. She says that she has two tongues. The image is metaphoric of a supernumerary organ, which is an extra, a mal-function, and an abnormality. On the other hand

> "Tongue": both organ used for speech, and language spoken with it. Poem is about **personal and cultural identity**. Familiar metaphor of tongue used in novel way to show that losing one's language is like losing part of one's body. (Moore, NEAB/AQA Anthology Revision Notes)

On a more positive note of globalization, the diasporic experience, in one way, is ironically a happenstance of hope. It is an opening up of borders, however partial. Migration is an example of assimilation and accommodation. Contrary to this initial hope, migration is an Alzheimer's of cultural identity, a forgetting that drains out the

strength of subjectivity:

> I thought I spit it out/ but overnight while I dream, /…/ it grows back, a stump of a shoot/ grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins,/ it ties the other tongue in knots,/ the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,/ it pushes the other tongue aside./ Everytime I think I've forgotten,/ I think I've lost the mother tongue,/ it blossoms out of my mouth. (Bhatt, Tumblr blog)

The mother tongue rots in one's mouth, one has to spit it out, but it grows back again in dreams. Thus, the mother tongue is always present in her unconscious, in the deep recesses of her mind. It surfaces from the seemingly oblivious space in the poet's personality. Writing is a personal experience for Bhatt because they are ways of understanding life, but once the poem is published it ceases to have only her voice:

> The voice in my poems comes from a different source from the voice in my prose. In my poem, 'The Voices' (in The Stinking Rose) I've developed this idea (which is more than an idea - it is my experience) that I feel connected to more than one voice and that each voice is 'true' in its own way. No matter how autobiographical a poem is I feel that once it's published it has a life of its own, separate from mine. (Bertram, *Interview with Sujata Bhatt*)

Her poetry makes us realize that cultures can never come together in a way where all boundaries between them are demolished. As political history reveals, the eradication of boundaries and binaries is a process that extends far beyond a life time. It requires the expulsion of a certain mindset and not simply an articulation of another. Our endeavours in dealing with oppression should be patient and involve solidarity. Most social activism is like lime-coating a house when the plague infected is still in it. Agency must be sequential and consequential and the position of marginalization must be come to terms with systematically, collectively and patiently over a period of time.

What are closest to Bhatt as a poet are her experiences of being a female and a migrant. These experiences are moulders of her subjectivity because they are the driving forces of her life. Bhatt's poetry is a life force for her, like the water in her poem "Fate". She draws on this life force and in the process attempts to understand life. She creates ties of solidarity with other women, migrants, poets and even nature to make sense of who she is, and to belong to a larger community in the middle of existing in a no man's land as a migrant to face a common adversary as a colonized subject in a community.

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Unveiling the Purdah Rushdie Style: Women in/of *The Satanic Verses*

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Memoir is out and so is the ghost of "The Rushdie Affair" that has ever troubled the man who was given the unfunny Valentine gift on 14th of February 1989. Referred to as 'Satan Rushdy' his novel brought him more of notoriety than success. The albatross of his work still appears to be hanging around his neck. Though the Iranian government has lifted the fatwa[1] over his head but nothing can rescind the psychological injuries that left an indelible impression on his psyche. Time and again, he has mentioned about the whole of affair, the reactions, support and the controversy attached to it. Memoir echoes the ever raging tumult that has been raging within him where ever he goes and whatever he does. He is living with it. He is dying with it. "I'm a dead man" (Rushdie: 2012) as he pens down in his autobiography. The Satanic Verses is more than a book as the controversy attached with it has reflected. The literary aspect of it has been forced into the background and the gamut of social, cultural, religious and political implications have been cut open by one and all, thereby making Rushdie and The Rushdie Affair a household name.

> Robert Macneil, co-host of the "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, "leaned across the television studio desk and told in mid-February 1989, "You know, I've been reporting the news for decades, but I've never before seen a novel as the lead item in the day's news." (Pipes: 15)

Such comments were just a reflection of the wide attention that Rushdie and his work were to get in coming times. Whenever we talk of the novel, the discussion more often than not restricts itself to issues like the religious bigotry, talking about the freedom of speech as far Rushdie as a writer is concerned or about the talk of fatwa. Without getting into the polemics of such fiercely contested issues, the thrust of this article is to

venture onto a land where few have made journey to.

Writers are never naïve and it is more so with the postmodern writers. Their constant will is to deconstruct the accepted modes of discourse. Rushdie is no exception. As a postmodern postcolonial writer, Rushdie's focus in this book has been on various agendas: migration; airing his views on fundamentalism; on deconstructing the grand narratives and subverting things rarely talked about. The Satanic Verses is his Poetics of Postmodernism[2] working on all such above mentioned issues. But as said above, the article will deal with one such issue which has very rarely been touched and analysed. It is the unveiling of the purdah from the prevalent image of women. In the narrative, women play an important role in this controversial work and they form the focal point of this analysis. In this book, Rushdie highlights and then subverts the accepted position of women within the Muslim world. The marginalised 'Other' (in a phallocentric world) is put in a position of importance. They don't remain in the periphery but are in the thick of intense action along with their male counterparts. Talking about the position of women, Rushdie in his Imaginary Homelands says that

> The rejection of the three goddesses in the novel's dream-version of the 'satanic verses' story is also intended to make other points, for example about the religion's attitude to women. 'Shall He [God] have daughters while you have sons? That would be an unjust division, 'read the verses still to be found in the Qur'an. I thought it was at least worth pointing out that one of the reasons for rejecting these goddesses was that they were female. The rejection has implications that are worth thinking about. I suggest that such highlighting is a proper function of literature (Rushdie 1992: 399-400).

So, whether it is the abrogation of these goddesses; or Hind, wife of Abu Simbel, considering herself to be on equal footing as to Mahound, or the religious journey of the people of Titlipur to Mecca under the inspirational guidance of Ayesha: all female characters stand tall in the narrative. Rushdie moves beyond the normal realms and probes the

role and position of women. The conventional role of women is blurred in this magic real narrative. He shatters the accepted binaries (men/ women) and instead of reversing the binary positions he redefines them. He picks up women from different strands-- from religion, from postcolonial world and from history and makes them an integral part of this work.

To many, The Satanic Verses appears to be a book which is highly ambiguous, scattered and with a disjointed plot structure. Some thought it to be a work where multiple stories are forcibly clubbed together. But Rushdie was very clear and precise with the plot. In an interview to Colin MacCabe, Rushdie talks about the various strands that make up the plot.

> At one point I thought they were probably three different books. When I first thought of the story about the village that walks to the sea, my idea arose out of an incident that really happened in Pakistan…. Similarly with the actual Satanic Verses incidentthat was something I'd known about since I was at university…. And that was the point at which I said to myselfthis isn't three books, it's one (Ray 2006: 188-189).

Divided into nine sections, this intricate narrative spans across various times, places and spaces, introducing a host of characters, some of who bear similar names in different storylines. Classified broadly, the narrative deals with three important stories -- all related to Gibreel and his delusions. The first story of the narrative moves from Indian subcontinent to London dealing with the lives of two male characters- Gibreel and Saladin; the next story takes us to ancient cities through dream sequences of Gibreel, from pre-Islamic times to the time of the birth of a new religion; and the last story is about Ayesha's religious journey in Gibreel's dream sequences. The text centres primarily around two male characters: Gibreel Farista, an Indian film star; and Saladin Chamcha, an anglophile and also an artist. The inner and outer conflicts of both make up a coherent and consistent plot. Rushdie also admits this.

> The Satanic Verses is the story of two painfully divided selves. In the case of one, Saladin Chamcha, the division is secular and societal; he is torn, to put it plainly, between Bombay and London, between East and West. For the other, Gibreel Farista, the division is spiritual, a rift in the soul. He has lost his faith and is strung out between his immense need to believe and his inability to do so. The novel is 'about' their quest for wholeness (Rushdie1992: 397).

Both the characters try their level best to identify and define themselves but as we tread through their stories we find that their endeavours are grossly affected with the associations they have with the females in their lives. Even the dream sequences of Gibreel relate the importance of female characters. As such, the analysis of this article goes beyond the role and importance of these two males in the narrative. The book consists of a host of female characters. Ignoring their relevance and importance is impossible as seen within the cultural, social, religious and historical context within this narrative.

Starting with the women in the lives of both the protagonists, we find that these women shape their lives as they are associated with them intimately. Gibreel Farishta is lured by Rekha's beauty but it is after her death that she plays a potent role in his life. Rekha is the wife of a businessman and she falls in love with Gibreel. After her death she incessantly haunts him where ever he goes. Her impact is seen in the very opening section of this narrative. As Gibreel falls from the sky, Rekha curses him by saying, "Now that I am dead I have forgotten how to forgive. I curse you, my Gibreel, may your life be hell" (TSV: 8). Later on, when Gibreel reaches London, he finds Rekha again tormenting her. She says that she has been with him "To watch you fall, 'she instantly replied. 'Look around, 'she added, 'I've already made you look like a pretty big fool.'(TSV: 8) She follows him everywhere and he finally couldn't cope up with the pressure and falls flat on the ground, unconscious. Rekha is although dead but she acts like a protrusion of Gibreel's delusions but Gibreel is so much drowned in the pool of such delusions that he never realises this thing. She is more a threat to him, to his thoughts, than she was, when alive. Finally he overcomes his delusions and succeeds in relegating her from his mind. "He let her have it straight off. 'It's a trick. There is no God but God. You are neither the Entity nor Its adversary, but

only some caterwauling mist….as whatever was left of Rekha flew with vanquished fury into the sun."(TSV: 335) Rekha may have been harmless woman when alive but she definitely guides Gabriel to madness. She is an influential character as such and her rebirth asserts the power of women in men's life. She assumes the power of a magician and controls Gibreel's mind and thoughts.

Equally influential is Allie, conqueror of Mount Everest and Gibreel's heart-throb. She is an ambitious girl who is very practical and successful in achieving her goals. She is a typical western female, reared up in England, who takes up the challenges head on. It is her daring and strong character that attracts Gibreel's attention and he falls for her: "the moment she turned around and started walking back I fell in love with her. Alleluia Cone, climber of mountains, vanquisher of Everest, blonde yahudan, icequeen. Her challenge, change your life, or did you get it back for nothing, I couldn't resist" (TSV: 30-31). So much enamoured by her and the challenge she threw at him, Gibreel left for London. She in fact mirrors the image of the females in the Western society: independent and ready to confront challenges as they come. Both the women in Gibreel's life are very instrumental in furthering the plot and are very integral to his life, as such. Both fall prey to his delusions but stand tall with their strong intents.

Saladin Chamcha, an Anglophile, marries Pamela Lovelace especially for a specific reason: love for England. Even Pamela marries him to defy her parents wish. She loves to work for the poor. Very soon she realises the mistake of marrying him as both had different intents and purposes. Stamping her will, she decides to be the beloved of Saladin's friend Jumpy Joshi, after she learns of the air crash in which Saladin was travelling. She does no mourning and is not remorseless for what she does. She realises her mistake in marrying Saladin and rejects him when he comes back to her. Then there is Zeenat Vakil, girlfriend of Saladin, who is an educated, modern, well read, involved in politics and also a writer. She is quite a strong character and beds with Saladin without any inhibitions. She shows mirror to Saladin and tells him to give up his English ways. She is very blunt in her comments, ridicules him and tells him to come back to Bombay.

> 'Sometimes, when you're quiet,' she murmured, 'when you aren't doing funny voices or acting grand, and when you forget people are watching, you look just like a blank….Such a fool, you,the big star whose face is the wrong colour for their colour T Vs, who has to travel to wogland with some two-bit company,... They kick you around and still you stay, you love them, bloody slave mentality, I swear. Chamcha,' she grabbed his shoulders and shook him, sitting astride him with her forbidden breasts a few inches from his face, 'Salad baba, whatever you call yourself, for Pete's sake come home.'
>
> (TSV: 61)

Zeeny is an unorthodox Muslim woman who loves to live a free life on her own terms. She really wants Saladin to realise his true self. She succeeds in making him come back to India and as the narrative comes to an end, he follows her, "'I'm coming,' he answered her, and turned away from the view" (TSV: 547).

Rushdie has taken women from both the East and the West. Alleluia and Pamela belong to West whereas Rekha and Zeeny Vakil are representatives from the East. He has intentionally reversed the conventional passive roles of the women in a male dominated world and given them equal footing. All these females in the narrative as connected with the two lead male characters' are very strong. They all are unique in their own ways and serve as an antidote to their male counterparts.

So much of controversy that has been associated with The Satanic Verses is with the history of the origin of Islam as shown through the dream sequences of Gibreel. There had been a lot of hue and cry as far as the life of Muhammad (pbuh)[4] and his wives is concerned and also considering Koran as a product of a mortal being.

> Indeed in The Satanic Verses Rushdie uses the narrative of Mahound to satirise monolithic and ahistorical interpretations of Islamic law, and to offer a surreptious critique of the positioning of women in certain (but by no means all) manifestations of the faith. The continuing adherence to such interpretations, Rushdie suggests, is the result of a refusal to accept that the

> evolution of the holy book is an event in history, and that the book was subject to the ideological and cultural assumptions of the period in which it was written.(Teverson:156)

Without getting into such polemics, this article picks up the dream sequences of Gibreel to discuss how, again, females play a pivotal role vis-à-vis their male counterparts. Rushdie has taken recourse to magic realism to play with the historical elements. The narrative is a product of historiographic metafiction where fiction plays with history to give an illusion of reality. Now when we talk of the title of the narrative, we see that these verses which have stirred so much of a controversy relate to the three powerful goddesses al-Lat, Manat and Uzza. They were the most important of all the gods and goddesses worshipped at Jahilia and were a source of the sustained source of income for the ruler i.e. Grandee of Jahilia.

> They bow before all three: Uzza of the radiant visage, goddess of beauty and love; dark, obscure Manat, her face averted, her purposes mysterious, sifting sand between her fingersshe's in charge of destinyshe's fate; and lastly the highest of the three, the mother-goddess, whom the greek called Lato. Ilat, they call her here, or, more frequently, Al- Lat. The goddess. Even her name makes her Allah's opposite and equal. Lat the omnipotent. (TSV: 99-100)

These deities were the most revered and as seen in the narrative the shrines of all the three are situated at the different gates of the city and are a source of revenue from the from the people who used to come to this city as traders. As such, any threat to their position is seen as a threat to the economy of the city. So when Mahound comes and tries to spread the message of Allah, he is forced to leave the place. The message appears to Mahound's adversary as a threat to polytheism that was practised in Jahilia. Even later on Mahound is allowed to come back to the city on a condition that he accepts the existence and importance of the three goddesses. Mahound comes to the city and accepts them by saying that

the archangel consented to the importance of the three. This is what he announces

> 'Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza, and Manat, the third, the other?'… 'They are exalted birds, and their intercession is desired indeed.'(TSV: 114)

The damage is done. The importance is realised. By including these verses in his narrative, Rushdie plays upon the controversial chapter of the Islamic history. But one thing is crystal clear that even though Mahound realises his mistake later on, and declares that these verses were spoken to him not by the archangel but by the devil, we can't ignore that Rushdie through this incident has tried to investigate the position of women in the Islamic world. Women are constantly relegated to a position of submission, denial and segregation.

The brothel story in the dream sequence of Gibreel also highlights the cause of the women. All the whores living in the brothel take up their names after the wives of Mahound. The women sell their bodies for their sustenance. Their bodies become the object of desire and once they acquire the names of Mahound's wives. The brothel becomes a place of constant attraction. Men pour in numbers and bed with the whores. The whore who has taken the name of Ayesha, the youngest wife of Mahound, is the most sought after. All of them become an object of desire. The position of women is mocked at, in a traditional set up, in a place where she is kept under a veil. The women in the brothel are also contrasted with the world of the Harem. Rushdie does this by naming the brothel as Hijab which means a curtain. The plight of the females is highlighted through this contrast.

> The Curtain is the name behind which these women take action or located by Rushdie. Surprisingly enough, Rushdie talks about the real wives as being curtained (secluded in the harem); this abridges the two entities…. This uncovers the tension between the material and the spiritual worlds. Rushdie may mean here that when there is something untouchable (spiritual) one would try to materialize it in order to

make it tangible. (Meraay: 35-36)

What is thought of as sacred and kept veiled is made tangible in the harem and this is the reason why the brothel is flooded with customers. Although the women in both the places are a segregated lot yet by bringing both the worlds side by side, Rushdie illuminates us on the "inverted echo between the two worldsis that the men of 'Jahilia' are enabled to act out an ancient dream of power and possession, the dream of possessing the queen. That men should be so aroused by the great ladies' whorish counterfeits say something about them…, and about the extent to which sexual relations have to do with possession (Rushdie 1992: 402). This also shows that how women are looked upon as far the existence of women in the social and cultural context is seen. Rushdie, in doing this, forces us to look at it with a different viewpoint. The silences that are observed on both the sides, show the position of a women in such worlds, which are entirely opposite but have common features: females as object of desires, muted and playing second fiddle to men.

Even the rules as to how women should behave are ridiculed by Rushdie via Salman, the scribe. Salman tells Baal that, 'the angel starts pouring out rules about what women mustn't do, he starts forcing them back into the docile attitudes the Prophet prefers, docile or maternal, walking three steps behind or sitting at home being wise and waxing their chins'(TSV: 367). Women have to follow these rules as laid within the religious constrictors. Both the brothel and the rules story foreground the plight of women in the Islamic setup. In discussing about both the issues, Rushdie shows how female are segregated, thought of as objects of desire and also seen as inferior to males.

Another female that finds a role in Gibreel's dream sequences is Hind. The narrative has two female characters bearing the same name. One is Hind, wife of Mohammad Sufyan. She is the one who provides shelter to Saladin. The other one is the wife of Abu Simbel, the grandee of Jahilia. She is one of the powerful characters who kills Mahound's uncle because he had killed her brothers. As Mahound starts to profess his new faith, she becomes his fierce adversary and forces him out of Jahilia.

> In the chapters about Jahilia, she is Mahound's worst enemy, unbending and unchanged for many years…...

> the narrator notes about her when Mahound returns to Jahilia after his exile in Yathrib to finally institute his monotheistic religion Submission and consequently abolish the 360 existing god (desse) s spearheaded by Al-Lat. Through the Hind figure, one of the novel's main themes is introduced, the theme of compromise versus intransigence. (Soren: 144)

This theme can be seen as part of Rushdie's attempt to highlight the role of women who are ready to show defiance to the cultural, social and religious principles. Rushdie opens up the gender inequality concerns. She considers herself to be Mahound's equal and also his opposite. She is not ready to see the position of three goddesses degraded. She tells Mahound, "'If you are for Allah, I am for Al-Lat'" (TSV: 121). She further states, "'AL-Lat hasn't the slightest wish to be his daughter. She is equal, as I am yours" (TSV: 121). Hind refuses to be in a position of subjugation and declares, "'Between Allah and the Three there can be no peace. I don't want it. I want the fight. To the death; that is the kind of idea I am. What kind are you?'"(TSV: 121)

Rushdie problemtises the status of women in the society as is seen through Hind's defiant nature. She is against the patriarchial set up and is in charge of the revenues of the three temples. She is also against the state professing monotheism. She forces Mahound to accept the three goddesses, later to be revoked, which leads to celebration in the city. Her importance and strength is further highlighted in the text when she succeeds in killing Mahound. She, with her magical powers, invokes Al-Lat and when Mahound is about to die he hears Al-Lat's voice who speaks to him. "It is my revenge upon you, and I am satisfied. Let them cut a camel's hamstrings and set it on your grave." (TSV: 394)

The story of females making their voices heard in the text doesn't stop with Hind. There is another character in the plot that is equally imposing, impressive and inspirational to be defied by anyone. She is Ayesha. Again we have more than one woman in the narrative having the same name. One is a whore in a brothel who takes up this name and attracts the attention of Baal, the poet. Then there is a cruel ruler of Desh in the Imam story. The one who again holds our attention in the dream sequences of Gibreel is Ayesha, the young village girl who leads all the

villagers to the journey to Mecca. Now in this story, she like all other females in other sections has to face a staunch opposition. Mirza Saeed, with a westernized mindset, is against her. He tries his level best to stop her in influencing people of the village Titlipur to go with her on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Ayesha tells him about his wife's disease and even though he dissuades his wife, she accompanies Ayesha on the journey. Ayesha has to face many difficulties on the way. Many pilgrims died on the way, health of many deteriorated and even the state of children was bad. Mirza incessantly tries to change the minds of all the villagers. "Give up,' he implored uselessly. 'Tomorrow we will all be killed.' Ayesha whispered in Mishal's ear, and she spoke up: 'Better a martyr than a coward. Are there any cowards here?' (TSV: 489). Finally, the whole group reaches The Arabian Sea. Ayesha orders everyone to come behind her and declares that the Sea would soon part for them to make way to Mecca. This incident has strong associations with the biblical story where Moses parts The Red Sea, thus, elevating Ayesha to the level of Moses. The Arabian Sea parts and all enter. Mirza Saeed fails in his endeavours to overpower the might of that ordinary looking village girl. Before he dies, he dreams of Ayesha

> He was a fortress with clanging gates. He was drowning. She was drowning, too… His body split apart from his adam's apple to his groin, so that she could reach deep within him, and now she was open, they all were, and at the moment of their opening the waters parted, and they walked to Mecca across the bed of the Arabian Sea. (TSV: 507)

Ayesha succeeds in making Mirza surrender to the strength of femaleness and in reaching deep within him; she shows the inevitability of the male world to accept and acknowledge the power of females.

Moving across the various sections and meeting the female characters that play such a vital role to further the narrative, we find that Rushdie has used them to show how women stand tall within the binary opposition. He redefines the approach of all of us to look at them from a different angle. Rushdie also challenges the accepted modes of looking at the position of women in Islamic world: living within the four walls leading a segregated and subjugated life. All the female characters, whether from

the East or the West or portrayed in the dream sequences of Gibreel: all deconstruct the approach of gender inequality in the Islamic world. Here is a narrative that neither discusses reversal of roles nor expresses the concept of new age woman, but instead of unearthing the latent strength and the power of women themselves; it rebuilds and reinstates the confidence they have lost in their suppression and conditioning. The narrative relocates and redefines them in religious and material world. Thus, it re-establishes the women on a new platform and gives them a voice unheard before. Rushdie unveils the purdah covertly.

NOTES

[1]Fatwa: A religious edict.
[2]Poetics of Postmodernism: Name of a book written by Linda Hutcheon.
[3]Imaam: The one who leads Islamic worship services.
[4]Pbuh: Peace Be Upon Him.

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Subalternity and Empowerment: A Study of Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali*

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> You who have made the mistake of being born in this country Must now rectify it: either leave the country, Or make war! (Bagul 70).

The term 'Subaltern' in its original meaning referred to subordinate groups within military hierarchies. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian social theorist, used this term in his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935), as a concept referring to groups in society subjected to the hegemony of the dominant ruling classes. Later the concept was adopted and adapted to post-colonial studies from the works of the Subaltern Studies Historians Group. According to Ranajit Guha, the founder of the subaltern school, the great masses of Indian population have been excluded by the national historiographers from the status of political subjects as subalterns and the purpose of the Subaltern Studies historians is to rectify the imbalance created in academic work by a tendency to focus on elites and elite culture in South Asian historiography. These historians claimed to reconstruct the lost voices of the subaltern group by amplifying the "contribution made by the people on their own, that is, independently of the elite to the making and development of this nationalism" (Guha 3).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak further problematizes the assumptions related to the subalterns in her essay "Can the Subaltern speak?" She challenges the hypothesis of the Subaltern Studies historians and rejects the idea that the subaltern's consciousness can ever be fully recovered as a positive presence. She also points out that the theoreticians like Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault assumed that the oppressed can "speak and know their condition" (Spivak 283). They claimed that the oppressed subject, embedded within politics and relations of power, can speak, without mediation, as a self. But Spivak stresses the difficulties and contradictions in constructing a 'speaking

position' for the subaltern. She chooses the *sati* as an emblematic of the subaltern and expounds the combined workings of colonialism and patriarchy that suppress the *sati* from articulating her point of view. Her conclusion is that "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak 308). Radhika Borde, a PhD researcher, presents another perspective on the positioning of the subaltern in her article "Did the Subaltern Speak?". She writes about the subalternity of the Asur Ironsmiths of Jharkhand and their attempts to make themselves heard. She asserts that the subaltern's voice does not need to be heard by anybody other than the subaltern itself:

> Spivak's essay concludes on the anguished note that 'the subaltern cannot speak' (1988: 308), due to the fact that other women did not hear her. The question of why the subaltern did not speak may thus be rephrased as why the subaltern, more importantly, did not hear (Borde 282).

Mahasweta Devi in her short story, *Rudali* achieves this class consciousness and presents the attempts of subalterns to make themselves heard. The story presents the evolution of the central character, Sanichri, who learns to assert herself with the passage of time and becomes instrumental in providing moral support and empowerment to other marginalized women in the story. Her exploitation at the hands of the priests and the landlords compels her to fight back and employ the system against her masters who had so far exploited her. . Sanichri goes into business as rudali, commodifies her tears, learns to confront her superiors boldly and manipulate the situation cunningly to trap them in their own hypocrisy. She encourages the other women to adopt this profession to draw out the wealth from the feudal lords, which was sucked out of the flesh and blood of the low caste villagers. As Anjum Katyal asserts: "By the end of this text, the custom of rudali has been politicized. Not just a means of survival, it is an instrument of empowerment, a subaltern tool of revenge" (Katyal 30).

In her journey towards empowerment, Sanichri had to bear a lot. Through her sufferings, Mahasweta Devi presents the repressed state of the subaltern and the extreme strategies of survival employed by them. Sanichri is a Ganju by caste and lives in Tahad village. Her problems are

common to her gender and community and she too like the other low castes villagers, lives in desperate poverty. These low caste people are subjected to exploitation by the cunning and avaricious feudal lords. The malik-mahajans are high caste Rajputs and to control the economy becomes their God given right.

Dulan, one of the villagers, acts as the speaker and narrates the incident that took place two hundred years ago in their village which decided the hierarchical system which is still prevalent. The Raja of Chhotanagpur sent his Rajput army to invade and suppress the uprising in the villages. They murdered many innocent villagers and burned down their villages. The militant tribal leaders Harda and Donka Munda rebelled but they were brutally repressed. The Raja asked seven Rajputs to acquire the land of Tahad and settle there. He tells them how the feudal lords invaded the land which originally belonged to the tribal people earlier by "throwing swords in the air" and now by "shooting bullets at people and flinging flaming torches at their settlements" (Devi 95). They still play an active role in terrorizing the villagers so that they never dare to raise their heads:

> There may be litigations and ill will between the maliks, but they have certain things in common. Except for salt, kerosene and postcards, they don't need to buy anything. They have elephants, horses, livestock, illegitimate children, kept women, venereal diseases and a philosophy that he who owns the gun owns the land. They all worship household deities who repay them amply- after all, in the name of the deities they hold acres which are exempt from taxes and reforms (Devi 95-96).

These malik-mahajans were the chief reason behind Sanichri's inability to mourn over the death of her dear ones. At the time of her mother-in-law's death, her husband and his brother were locked up in jail because Ramavatar Singh was, "Enraged at the loss of some wheat, he had all the young Dushad and Ganju males of the village locked up" (Devi 72). She could not even shed tears at the death of her brother-in-law and sister-in-law because of the fear that Ramavatar Singh was trying to evict

all the Dushads and Ganjus from the village. Later she had to take debt from Ramavatar Singh for the kriya of her husband and consequently she became a bonded labourer in his fields. Keeping the low caste under the pressure of debt helps the feudal lords to control them as "It was not the amount that mattered- that was of less value than the dust off their shoes. What mattered was the yoke, the burden of debt that kept them laboring like cattle" (Devi 76). The degradation of their ethics becomes even more evident when they have to arrange Rudalis to cry at the death of their family members as they are unable to do so. They were only occupied with showing off their splendor by spending huge amount of money on their funerals:

> When someone died in a malik-mahajan household, the amount of money spent on the death ceremony immediately raised the prestige of the family . . . the price for this was paid by the dushads, dhobis, ganjus and kols, from the hides of whom the overlords extracted the sums they had overspent (Devi 103).

Sanichri feels the loss of her husband but the practical need to survive is overpowering which never allows her to express her grief. But on the other hand the rich landlords manage to philosophize over the deaths of their relatives. As we notice Ramavatar's words when he tries to justify his act of wiping out Sanichri's debt, "My uncle was dying, my mind was heavy with sorrow, I was feeling very low. I felt that I should give away everything to anyone who wanted it, and become a sanyasi" (Devi 76). Though these landlords are unable to shed genuine tears at the death of their relatives but they manage to give politically correct statements.

The narrative highlights the hypocrisy of the rich landlords who would rather spend huge amount of money on the funerals of their relatives than providing them care and required treatments. They prefer to chalk out plans for arranging grand funerals as it adds to their great status. Nathuni Singh, who owed all his wealth to his mother was not willing to provide any medical treatment to his mother on her death bed but was making arrangements to spend thirty thousand on her funeral. The hypocrisy and the corruption of the masters become even more evident in the episode in which Bhairab Singh is killed by his own son

and Lachman Singh, his kinsman makes an appearance beside the murdered corpse. Lachman Singh, himself interested in the land, promises to manipulate the situation in order to save the murderer from his step brothers:

> How does it matter who killed him? The main thing is, he is dead. Hai, Chacha! As long as you were alive, the lower caste never dared raise their heads. For fear of you, the sons of dushads and ganjus never dared attend government schools! Now, who will take care of all these things? . . . . . We must perform the ceremonies and burial with pomp and splendor. Dress up the body, place him on a big bed. And inform our entire Rajput clan (Devi 88).

Whereas the upper caste people are projected to be very oppressive towards the lower caste people, the latter have been shown to be very supportive and sympathetic to the sufferings of each other. They all lead a life of deprivation and understand suffering. The villagers play an instrumental role in the growth of Sanichri from a docile subaltern to an assertive being. As she herself admits, "In order to survive, the poor and oppressed need the support of the other poor and oppressed" (Devi 82).

Sanichri's son Budhua was a sensitive and caring son but after his death when she found herself completely alone, she was sustained by the villagers. Her daughter-in-law abandoned her son Haroa after the death of her husband and now Sanichri had no means to feed her grandson and her own self. At that time she was offered help by Dulan's wife who took her grandson to her daughter-in-law, who was nursing a child, to be breastfed. Prabhu Ganju, another villager offers her to shift her hut in his yard, "You are completely alone now. You are like an aunt to me, why don't you shift your hut into my yard" (Devi 81). Natua Dushad sells vegetables for her. In addition, they had the sensitivity to remain quiet over the elopement of her daughter-in-law and about her becoming a whore. These poor villagers do not attempt to put each other at shame. Their support for Sanichri is unconditional.

Sanichri forms a strong bonding with Bikhni because of the

similar circumstances they were facing, Sanichri's grandson ran away and Bikhni's son refused to support his mother. Being abandoned and alone they could understand each other's agony. Anjum Katyal rightly describes their situation: "Socially and financially they are equals; both are equally without family, equally abandoned: on the basis of their common situation, they construct their companionship. Once again, the author turns disability into an enabling force" (Katyal 25). They were both poor and struggling for survival but Bikhni was not in despair. In order to survive she was willing to beg at the station. Later in the story when Dulan suggests them to become Rudalis, Bikhni grasps the idea immediately. When Sanichri expresses her doubts that the people will talk ill about the profession, Bikhni asserts: "So let them talk!" (Devi 92). By the end of the story Sanichri also sheds her cocoon and becomes assertive and independent like Bikhni.

Dulan, with his knowledge and guidance also plays an important role in the empowerment of Sanichri. At every stage Dulan encourages Sanichri with his practical wisdom. Anjum Katyal's observation about him is very apt: "He embodies the resistant will, the sharp intelligence, the irreverence, the cynicism and the cunning that the subaltern uses to subvert the total control of the masters" (Katyal 11). He is critical of the hypocrisy of the malik-mahajans. He tells them that these Rajputs, though related by blood "can't summon up tears even at the death of their own brothers and fathers, won't they count their kriya cost?" (Devi 98). He makes Sanichri aware of the possibility of resistance by talking about the courageous Harda and Donka Munda. He does not believe that there is anything natural about their troubles. He believes in the need of subverting the existing system.

Dulan also tells them how the malik-mahajans are responsible for creating whores. They keep women as their mistresses and after their gratification, abandon them, thus they are compelled to commodify their bodies in order to survive. Sanichri's daughter-in-law, Parbatia has been portrayed as a lady whose "hunger is greater". She has high aspirations which her husband, Budhua is unable to fulfill. She wants to work in the landlord's field but is snubbed by her husband, "I won't let you work in the malik's field. Young women who work for him never return home". On being asked by her that where do they go, he replies, "first to a nice house, then to a randipatti-the whore's quarter" (Devi 79). After her husband's

death, Parbatia elopes with a medicine man who promises to gratify her desires. She has not been presented as a negative character but as somebody who wanted to lead a better life and ultimately she had to suffer for her desires as she is abandoned to rot in the randipatti. On the other hand women like Gulbadan suffer because of the fate of being the daughter of Gambhir Singh, a rich landlord and of his kept woman, Motiya. Being acknowledged as the daughter of a whore, she is asked by her father to fulfill the demands of his nephew after her mother's death. Instead of surrendering herself to his nephew, she finds it better to work in the randipatti. "How could he tell his own daughter to sleep with his nephew? And when I have a child by him? One day they'll kick that child out in the same way. It's better for me to work in the marketplace" (Devi 104).

It is also for the sake of survival that Dulan suggests Sanichri and Bikhni to adopt the business of Rudalis. He tells them that for maintaining one's existence, there is nothing wrong or right. For the poor these considerations become meaningless as they only "understand hunger" (Devi 116). Dulan tells her that the system had exploited them for long but now they can turn the situation and use the system for their advantage instead of just being used by it. But shedding tears was an impossible task for Sanichri. She could never mourn for her family and mourning for those who had so far exploited her was incomprehensible for her. She could not grasp the idea initially and reacted, "Cry me? Don't you know? I can't shed tears? These two eyes of mine are scorched" (Devi 91). But Dulan explains to her, "These tears are your livelihood-you will see, just as you cut wheat and plough land, you'll be able to shed these tears" (Devi 91). He accompanies them, negotiates on their behalf and makes sure that they are fairly paid. He keeps himself informed about the amount budgeted for the funeral and so the account keeper has to pay them accordingly. He became, therefore, a threat to his so-called superiors. He asks Sanichri and Bikhni to keep themselves informed about the deaths in the households of the malik-mahajans so that they may wail at their funerals and flourish their business as Rudalis.

Sanichri and Bikhni became a professional team. They were in great demand after their performance at the funeral of Bhairab Singh. Their services were not cheap but they really did provide their money's worth. They used to lay down their terms and their service seekers had no option but to accept them:

> Just for wailing, one kind of rate.
> Wailing and rolling on the ground, five rupees one sikka.
> Wailing, rolling on the ground and beating one's head, five rupees two sikkas.
> Wailing and beating one's breast, accompanying the corpse to the cremation ground, rolling around on the ground there- for that the charge is six rupees
>
> (Devi 97).

Sanichri and Bikhni learnt all the tacts of their business and knew how to extract the most benefit from the feudal lords. But Sanichri receives another shock of her life when she learns that Bikhni died when she had gone to see her son on the pretext of attending a wedding. At the loss of her wailing partner Sanichri feels completely alone and goes to Dulan once again for advice, who tells her, "Look Budhua's ma. It's wrong to give up one's land, and your profession of funeral wailing is like your land, you mustn't give it up (Devi 114). He asks her to go to Tohri and urge the whores to join the profession of Rudalis. He firmly tells her: "It is the question of your survival. You must go yourself" (Devi 115). Earlier Bikhni used to go to Tohri randipatti to interact with the whores but now Sanichri would have to perform this task.

Mahasweta Devi herself comments that "Rudali is about . . . 'how to survive' . . . 'bread and mouth' (qtd in Katyal 11). She boldly declares in *Rudali* "The world belongs to the professional now, not to the amateur" (Devi 97). Sanichri commercializes her own tears for survival. The same instinct of survival is dominant in Mahasweta Devi's "Breast Giver" where we can hear the similar echoes: "The world belongs to the professional" (Devi, Breast Giver 40). Both Sanichri and Jashoda had to adopt unconventional professions for livelihood. Jashoda becomes the "Professional Mother" and feeds almost all the children of Haldar Babu's house. She takes this responsibility for the sake of her children and crippled husband. But at the end no one comes to console her and she dies in an abandoned state. Sanichri also becomes the "Professional Mourner" and sells her tears for living but she learns to employ the system against her masters who had so far exploited her. She is not the silent spectator of her miseries but has the courage to avenge herself. Ranajit

Guha describes this subaltern consciousness as 'pure' which cannot be dominated by the national politics:

> Guha finds that the consciousness in its 'pure state' consistently struggled against itself to assert its radical side, most successfully when it expressed itself in rebellion. Rebellion signified the true vocation of the peasant: to end his oppression and assert his independence by turning things upside down
>
> (Schwarz 308).

As the role of Dulan and Bikhni becomes instrumental in Sanichri's growth, now she herself becomes the source of inspiration for the whores in order to empower them. Standing by other marginalized women like a rock, she becomes instrumental in their empowerment. She asks the prostitutes to work as Rudalis as they had suffered immensely due to these landlords and they will get an opportunity to avenge themselves. As Sanichri tells them after the death of Gambhir Singh, "By wailing for him and taking their money, you'll be rubbing salt in their wounds. Don't hold back. Take whatever you can" (Devi 117). The chorus of more than hundred wailing Rudalis is subversive and articulates their triumph. The accountant and the nephew of Gambhir Singh could only watch helplessly as Sanichri wiled away their hopes of profit from the funeral as huge amount of money would have to be doled out to these hundred wailing rudalis. At the end of the story we can see how the united subaltern can be a threat for those in power. Gulbadan's sneering wink to the nephew of Ghambhir Singh presents their triumph and he could only watch these wailers helplessly. Radhika Borde experienced the similar counter-hegemonism during her fieldwork among the Asurs: "…they were not interested in getting me to 'hear' them. They were interested in getting me to 'hear' that they had 'heard' each other, in other words that they were possessed of class consciousness" (Borde 286).

Mahasweta Devi does not sentimentalize the sufferings of Sanichri. She depicts the misery of Sanichri with a clinical detachment. She does not present Sanichri as a muted subaltern who can be only sympathized but as a character whose evolution compels the readers to think about the possibility of resistance of the power structures. So long

the low castes had been exploited by the malik-mahajans who tried to crush them at every possible step. With the empowerment of Sanichri and her ability to evoke class consciousness, the possibility of influencing the system becomes evident.

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Exotic Woman In Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Dream In Hawaii*

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C.G. Jung while enunciating the concept of *Anima* and *Animus*, has specially alluded to the fact that the exotic woman in the life of an adult male, occupies a special place as she performs those roles which a wife refuses to perform and which a mother should not. The exotic woman in Bhattacharya's fiction receives quite fair treatment from her male counterpart as she performs the work of a heroine and elsewhere, in certain situations influences the course of the narrative in one way or the other. One of the most important traits in Bhattacharya's exotic woman is that she does not try to advance her status through the flagrant use of her physical charms to trap the protagonist in her exoticism. Instead, Bhattacharya through her portrayal reflects over some of the basic human virtues through his exotic women characters in order to bring out both the splendor and dignity of life.

The exotic woman not only inspires her lover (male counterpart), but also works positively for the betterment and welfare of the people around her. Her affirmative attitude towards life is incomparable and it is her affirmative vision of life that turns her partner hopeful and cheerful. Her naturalness makes her a wonderful person that further stimulates her man to think and act nobly. Thus, the exotic woman is provided space in the matters of love and related emotion. In the conservative Indian context, Bhattacharya has given tremendous importance to the woman as beloved as she transforms the life of her lover for the good of all. Her influence on her male counterpart's life is so strong yet subtle that his total life style and attitude changes unawares. Apart from the roles within the family's frame, the role of a beloved has gained an equal importance and strength for her social consciousness that she hardly looks a secondary being. The reason behind this encouraging presentation of woman as beloved by Bhattacharya is that he too sees his

wife, Salila, as an exotic beloved, who as an intellectual companion and energetic ally with him, and inspired him thoroughly even before he got married to her. He courted her for four months before marriage and her influence on his life and work could be seen and felt in his writings. Shimer, one of the most well known critics of Bhattacharya, agrees with the view that Salila was a "constant source of encouragement" (1975 : 17). As his mental life was largely shaped by the exotic beloved and wife, he had realistically portrayed the exotic women in his fiction in myriad shades and invested them with vital substance. Most of his exotic women characters find place as a beloved, apart from other roles that they play simultaneously.

Through their unadulterated and unqualified love, they make their lovers believe that the betterment of life should be the ultimate goal of every human activity. They are characterized by unusual combination of traits as goodness, purity, dignity, intelligence, selflessness and spontaneous kindness, emanating from the spirit of compassion. Unlike exotic women in Saul Bellow's fiction, Bhattacharya's exotic woman does not abandon herself to love to secure herself, but in this process, she completely denies herself in the end. She also wants to merge with her lover and forget herself in his arms.

The Exotic woman has a desire for a complete self-abnegation, abolishing the boundaries that separate her from the lover and responds to his demands. When she feels that she is necessary for the lover, she gets integrated with his existence and shares his worth. It is found that the more demands the man makes, the more gratified the woman feels. One feels that she is happy in surrendering to her lover and doing something for his happiness. At the same time, she tries to be useful to him in a positive way. According to Simone De Beauvoir:

> "But most often woman knows herself only as different . . . for her, love is not an intermediary 'between herself and herself' because she does not attain her subjective existence; she remains engulfed in this loving woman whom man has not only revealed, but created. Her salvation depends on this despotic free being that has made her and can instantly destroy her. She lives in fear and trembling before this man who holds her destiny in

his hands without quite knowing it, without quite wishing to. She is in danger through another, an anguished and powerless onlooker at her own fate" (1974 : 678).

In *A Dream in Hawaii*, Devjani emerges out as the strongest exotic woman character who exerts powerful influence on the whole life of Neeloy Mookherjee, Professor of Indian Philosophy at Benares Hindu University. The novel is centered round the learned Professor who renounces worldly life and pleasures and gradually metamorphoses into Swami Yoga and at a very young age, reinforced by the cumulative effect of the need and desire of his student- paramour, Devjani, who helps him seek his new identity. Again, this is Devjani who motivates him towards spiritual odyssey of *Swamihood* which catapults Swami Yoganand amongst India's spiritual elites at such an early stage of life:

"Time moves on. Swami Yoganand, intellect tempered by spiritual force, is now a well-known figure. Sadhana is an ashram of renown" (*DH* 17).

He knows the fact that the ascetic in him is at Devjani's behest. Prof Mookherjee delivers several lectures interpreting the *Bhagavat Gita* by giving plain words a dramatic content. He has received his mystical experience from Vivekananda and has a marvelous idea of presenting Universal Religion in its Vedantic concept. Although his wisdom is beyond question, he is unaware of his talent and intelligence. He is doubtful of his capacity and says: "A firefly can not be a star" (*DH* 87), but Devjani is confident that Neeloy has the making of such a star, because she has recognized his philosophical depth and wisdom and is assured of his capability. She is steady in her faith that a star should not become and remain a firefly. Thus, it is the firm insistence of Devjani that inspires Neeloy Mookherjee to attain his destiny of a spiritual leader, which satisfies his entire self:

"He had fulfilled her demand - yes, it was indeed a demand. Of course, in that process, he had fulfilled himself. With her extraordinary insight she had seen his

inmost being. That and his outer being had merged. The clash of identities that had troubled him in an uncertain year was now just memory. In his Yogananda image he was complete" (*DH* 128).

Earlier in her life, Devjani has to transform herself from a simple girl about to marry a young man and enjoy the common pleasures of life, to a seeker of higher knowledge, sublimating the body to pure spirit. Shocked at her mother's illicit relation with her father's friend, she decides to go to Benares for higher studies. She obtains a first class in M.A. and dedicates all her time and energy in research. In the beginning, she becomes Prof. Neeloy's favourite student, but later the Professor develops a feeling of love in his heart for her and has a passionate impulse:

"To undo the braided hair and let the dishevelled mass cascade over her bosom! Just to see what she looks like in such wild abandon, the neatness gone" (*DH* 16).

She neglects her emotions and overrules his feelings for her under the impact of past experience of sordidness of relationship that she has seen--two middle aged naked bodies in bed. Her desire to turn Neeloy into a Swami is a reflection of her own need to transform sexual urges into spiritual strength. Yoganand owes his metamorphosis from a Philosophy teacher to a Swami, to Devjani- an extremely beautiful girl who serves as a catalytic agent in his struggle for a new identity, whether as an eager student of his Philosophy class or as a magnetic presence in the dynamic core of his *Swamihood:* "The obvious truth was that Yoganand was thinking of Devjani in his need of inner strength" (*DH* 206).

It shows the powerful impact of Devjani in the formation of the saint and providing him spiritual dimension of a high order. As Devjani's mental life gets intertwined with that of Prof. Mookherjee, it is time for Devjani, too, to recognise her need for him as she finds it difficult to keep him away from her mind and heart. Especially, when Neeloy Mookherjee finds his new identity and renounces the worldly life, she in her sheer loneliness thinks: "Yoganand gone, she would be unbearably alone" (*DH* 195). To come out of this void, she considers *Sadhana*(profound penance) as the reality and the end of her long

search. She decides: "My place is in *Sadhana*. All else has become meaningless. Only Sadhana matters" (*DH* 195).

Although she misses his presence when he renounces worldly pleasures and leaves Benares, she is confident of his success in his quest for finding his eternal self. Her faith remains unshaken, when she gets his surprise message through a letter from him, which states: "My blessings to you, Devjani. Remember the firefly? The firefly tries to be a star!" *(DH* 137). She is thrilled and excited to know that her desire to turn Neeloy Mookherjee into Swami Yoganand has finally turned true: "This was indeed her own victory!" (*DH* 137). Devjani's encounter with Yoganand in Hawaii is shocking for him as it triggers off introspection in him:

> "To have remained unmarried all these years, there was only one reason he could see. The strong hunger for a Spiritual life, defeating all other feelings and needs. Even though denied the guidance she had wanted and deserved, she has been steadfast, true to herself. The richness that Sadhana had forfeited!" (*DH* 129).

The experience of Swami Yoganand in Hawaii to give a direction and purpose to the contemporary desperate drift in American life is a dream, begins with his arrival in the 'beautiful Island' and ends with his abrupt departure from there. His dream about charming Devjani, which continues to torment him secretly since he has met her first in Benares, surfaces again in concrete form the night when Sylvia Koo dressed as Devjani, slips herself into his bed to defile him. His contact with the acquisitive and permissive society of America strengthens his faith in Vedantism, whereas his confession before Devjani of his intense feeling for her and his experience with Sylvia Koo sublimates his impure desires and releases him from his old self of Neeloy Mookherjee forever. The sanctified self of Swami Yoganand emerges out from the ordeal of confession to Devjani of his sinful thought, committed innocently.

Devjani could have owned the body and soul of Neeloy then and there, but she is a beloved of a higher plane; so she again encourages him to retain his purity and spirituality. And she succeeds in her mission: "There is no Neeloy . . . There is only Swami Yoganand" (*DH* 219). Yoganand, who returns to India after his brief stay in Hawaii, is a

transformed person, whose soul is no more racked by doubts about his sanctified personae. Devjani's contention that a spiritual leader cannot be made out of an empty person is true. It is she, who is mainly responsible for the birth of Swami Yoganand leading him to deny the sensual aspects of life by recognizing, and then reinforcing, only the spiritual being in him. She helps the Swami to keep his aim and image high. When Yoganand leaves Hawaii, she expresses her wish to him: "Reveal yourself again as an illumined one" (*DH* 223). Thus, Swami's journey back to his ashram (hermitage) is a journey of self-realization gained by the cumulative effect exerted on him by his beloved, Devjani. Balram S. Sorot explains the desires of Devjani, which she has for Yoganand, in critically apt words: "What Devjani ardently desires is a blending of the Western materialism and the Eastern spiritualism in the Swami" (1991: 99).

Devjani remains a constant source of inspiration for the Swami and she flows like an enormous energy in the alleyways of his innermost being. He even refuses to give *diksha* (religious initiation) to her because he "cannot bear to see Devjani in the yellow garb. Unadorned, even the red orb of vermillion on her forehead gone" (*DH* 17). She occupies a very strong position in Yogananda's life and remains a part of his human identity. Throughout, she appears to be an inspiring and spiritual source of his life force, It is believed that a young girl,

> "Even when she chooses independence, she none the less makes a place in her life for man, for love. She is likely to fear that if she devotes herself completely to some undertaking, she will miss her womanly destiny" (De Beauvoir 1974: 391).

Although this feeling often remains unexpressed, it is present all the time, which weakens well-defined purposes and sets limits:

> "A vicious circle is established and it is often astounding to see how readily a woman can give up music, study, her profession, once she has found a husband. She has clearly involved too little of herself till her plans to find much profit in accomplishing them" (De Beauvoir 1974 391-392).

But Devjani is entirely different from the established cultural codes and looks differently at these deep-rooted social morals. She lives her life on her own terms and even rejects the idea of marriage. In spite of being wanted and loved deeply by Prof. Mookherjee, she plans to live a single and lonely life. It is Devjani who makes a strong presence in the life and thought of the renowned Professor of Philosophy and moulds his life according to her wishes. Her role in metamorphosing Neeloy Mookherjee into Swami Yoganand is the key element in the narrative. She, after completing her M.A degree in Philosophy, teaches in India, but later resigns to go abroad, as the East-West Centre in Honolulu offers her a research grant. She has been living independently, devoting all her time and attention to her career. She creates her own space in the male-dominated world without giving up her independence and career.

Thus, exotic Devjani, though not the main protagonist of the novel, has a powerful presence in the novel and on the life and thoughts of Professor Mookherjee, as a result of which he is transformed into a Saint. She is the woman behind the success of her man. One day Swami Yoganand confesses before her that she has been haunting his dreams even during his stay in the Himalayan abode:

> "At Sadhana, where I was so far away from your presence, you were in my dreams at night. Year after year. The truth is that I never got away from Neeloy." (*DH* 212)

He further tells her that he finds it dill cult to overcome his love for her because a man who is physically starved cannot experience spirituality. He says: "Swami Yoganand has ceased to exist. This man you see is Neeloy Mookherjee. The yellow garb he still has to wear must be discarded." (*DH*211)

Then, at that weak moment even a slight deviation in her attitude and belief could have devastated the life of a Saint and made everything topsy-turvy. However, Devjani, made of sterner stuff, could not even dream of Swami Yoganand becoming Neeloy Mookherjee once again, and live life entirely on the physical plane, submerged in materialism: "The thought came quickly upon her that he could not be

two persons. What must he be? Yoganand or Neeloy? ... Having become an illumined one, could he find fulfillment just as Neeloy?" (*DH* 213). Therefore, it is her extraordinary strength of will that makes him realizes that Neeloy exists no more"... There is only Swami Yoganand" (*DH* 219).

Thus, Bhattacharya's exotic woman as beloved, not only influences the course of the narrative but also creates pools of happiness and inspire their counterparts for achieving better goals. Her goodness, simplicity, and nobility can be easily found in abundance, and because of her simple and easy attitudes the nobleness of her lover, too, influences her. Thus, love, in its true form, becomes a tool to add myriad riches to the life of the loving person.

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Regenerative Women of Shashi Deshpande's Short Stories

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The major concern of Shashi Deshpande is conflict in which the modern educated and hence more awakened woman is caught up. Torn by the pulls and pressures which tradition and patriarchy exert on her physical, social, psychological and mental makeup, the feeling of self expression and individuality becomes sterner. The quest for self identity, crossing all the barriers of social, domestic and sexual oppression, makes the works of Shashi Deshpande, especially her short stories, stand a class apart.

As Carol P. Christ defines: Women's social quest concerns women's struggle to gain respect, equality and freedom in society . . . In the social quest a woman begins in alienation from the human community and seeks new modes of relationship and action in society (106). Deshpande's women characters emerge victorious as they wrestle with their problems with vehemence and might and refuse to be cowed down. The new women of Deshpande, not wholly vanquishing the past, strive to voice their suppressed, though bold, protest for the meek and the submissive ones. The women of Deshpande are those who have suffered harassment, both physical and mental, at the hands of patriarchal rulers. Gasping in such a scenario, all is still not lost for them as the inner strength, wavering though it may be at times, envisions for themselves a regenerative future where salvation shall not be partial but complete.

Deshpande believes that "until women get over the handicaps imposed by society . . . the human race will not realize its full potential." In a society, as traditionally male dominated as the Indian society is, women have to try harder to carve out their identities. And the modern Indian women, as portrayed in Shashi Deshpande's novels, are definitely working towards that goal. The conflicting traditional and modern tendencies as regards the female identification have been subtly brought out in Shashi Deshpande's short stories. The spirit of post-modern Indian

English literature, muffled with the strains of past and present,yearning to usher in a more satisfying futuristic era, has been subtly drawn in the works of Shashi Deshpande. As Walters aptly opines, "Modern women are torn between the past and the possible, but difficult and yet unexplored, future" (99).

Deshpande suggests that regeneration shall emerge out of nothing less than compromise as she clarifies, "Lack of compromise would lead to nothing but death and destruction." Her female characters indicate a steady progress from self-alienation to self-discovery i.e. from darkness to light. They realize the acceptance of existence and face life boldly. They look at life with open eyes and face it with an open mind. My paper deals with this new generation of women depicted by Deshpande in her works especially her selected stories.

Jayu of the story, 'It was the Nightingale,' has to move away from her husband for two long years due to her professional pre-occupation and to get a 'bigger salary' as she herself comments. She has her mind all made up but the husband is trying to get her re- assurance. The voice of assertion is quite conspicuous in the lines when Jayu thinks about two of them: "To me our lives are intertwined, yet they are two different strands. They are like two lights that shine more brightly together. But to keep my light burning is my responsibility and mine alone" (13)

Jayu is quite sure what she requires from her life. Awareness has taught her how to draw a line and make a choice a definite choice which should not be impressed upon or influenced in any way. The new woman in Jayu tries to crush the traditional mindset by pushing forth her decisions and trying to stick to them, come what may. "And though he loves me, he finds it hard to accept me as I am" (14), she says. She is one of those women who knows her mind and does what she wants to. But her inner conflict refuses to subside. The modern woman in Jayu is still tied to the older set up where a woman can hardly imagine an independent life without her male counterpart. She finds her love for her husband a major block in letting go, with a carefree mind.

The mental strain that encompasses her, she feels it hard to overcome and has to get reassurance from herself every time she falters: "Two years, I tell myself. It is nothing--why am I making so big a thing of it?" (15). A split personality, she is difficult to fight the cocoon which the patriarchal society has built around her. Even as her husband holds her

close at the time of parting, she feels the reproach in him and at the same time the guilt in herself and wonders if they always come between us?" (16). Eventually, Jayu, failing to come to terms with herself, starts hating her modernist self and makes herself stand in the dock as she says: "And this is my doing and all my life I will carry the burden of this guilt" (15). Most of these female characters are regeneratively struggling with forces that condition their growth in a patriarchal, male dominated Indian society. They come into conflict with society as their individualism asserts itself heavily. They have to undergo the terror of facing single handed the ferocious assaults of existence.

'A Wall is Safer' is the story of a woman protagonist who despite her education and the fact that she can lead a financially well settled life, chooses otherwise by deciding to follow her husband even in the remotest areas for his job. The place where Hema and her husband Vasant now reside is an open area, embodying a sense of immensity. Hema feels: "The immensity makes nothing of you and your concerns…I am angered that it makes so many years of my life take on the grey colour of futility" (67). Hema has imbibed the masculine mind set, despite her lawyer friend Sushma's accusation of her being a defeatist and commenting: "You are just giving up" (68). But Hema reiterates, "Oh I'm all right as I am. After all I'm a good house wife now" (69). Although, at the same time, the sense of insignificance in her increases all the more. But at the same time she is caught up between the societal obligations as she comments about her husband:

"Well what can I do? This is the work he always wanted---vacation marriage. The children without their father for months, me without a husband for months. He without a wife and children for months" (68).

As Sushma coins a phrase 'devoted self effacing wife' (69) for Hema, the latter's mind accepts the word 'devoted' but the other part of the phrase leaves an indelible mark on her psyche as she feels that she has failed to secure a complete break against the stone walls of patriarchy. Although her attempts indicate a beginning of an era of freedom, still she is still, for the time, not ready, to take a feministic stand and instead feels safer by erecting a wall around herself to protect her against all insecurities. She does not let her husband to feel about it in the least: "You don't have to feel guilty, I want to say to Vasant.Its my doing. This coming

here. Nobody pushed me into it" (69).

Another character Sitabai, the lady servent of Hema, had been given the name by her in-laws to match with the name of her husband. "Sitabai and Ramachandra . . . apt names for a couple. But, of course, it isn't any happy coincidence. Since he was Ramachandra, the woman he married was named, renamed rather" (66). Sitabai mocks at the patriarchal ideology and says-"What can you expect when you're named Sitabai but troubles" (65). While her husband cares for 'the other woman' she is left to decide her own fate. Tormented she asks "Me a Sita? I'm here, not out of choice, but because there was none" (66).

Similarly, the protagonist in "The Stone Women," married five months back, goes on her honeymoon 'prowl' and is shown a temple endowed with the statues of high breasted-women in all kinds of poses, only to make her wonder at "the joyous, playful, narcissistic existence of these women" (11). As the attitude of man towards a woman has ever been the same for centuries together, the protagonist speculates whether the stone women could ever be the same as carved by the sculptors. She is astonished to see women thus and questions herself: "Were women ever like this? Could any woman have been like this?" (11). She has her mind made up to the fact that those women cannot be the same as it takes a heavy toll from out of a women to be really happy, happy from within, when the society around them is almost always at logger heads. She has the answer: "But they don't look real, a voice inside me protests" (11). Very soon she feels herself to be steadily being reduced to the same stony position as she feels, "For a moment, as he looks at me, I am overcome by sudden fear as if I am becoming one of those too, a woman frozen for all time into a pose she has been willed by her creator" (15).

In her story "I Want…" the female protagonist, "a daughter of 24 and not married," (35), wishes to assert her individualist self by trying to put forth, though not really, her wishes and desires which her parents simply ignore. Every time the match is decided the protagonist feels that one factor has been entirely overlooked and that is "me" (36) as she comments "as if I had no shape of my own. As if I was capable of taking any shape" (37). Time and again when a match is about to be decided the "woman in me was outraged and protested, I crushed her. She had no pace there. None at all" (37).

Like Virmati of Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters* and Uma of

Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting*, Alka is never allowed to be a child. The patriarchal set up in which Alka is reared, dwarfs her growth. Alka is helpless as she has no other option but to marry a partner of her parent's choice as she is a share burden on them having turned twenty seven. She herself bemoans, "Twenty seven. Time to forget dreams and compromise for security" (42). As the priorities are being fixed by her would-be husband, she feels like yelling: "I want…I want…I want…What about me? My silence was such a loud cry of indignation. I was surprised he couldn't hear me. But I had an odd feeling he would never hear me" (40). She feels that "No one has ever asked me what I wanted" (40) and when her life was being handed over to a man-a so called husband she thought,"My own wants began to dwindle. They were too insubstantial. (42). How had she wished to convey her silent rebellion to her parents and tell about her choice of a partner: "A man who hears my voice when I speak. Who understands me even when I don't, they would call me crazy." But then she asks "What was this set against a good job, family, etc, etc?" (42) and finally 'surrendered' her 'illusions and embraced reality' (42).

On the social level, the women like Alka have been struggling since ages to assert themselves but are still being heckled by their male counterparts and forced to remain silent. The norms of society, which compel them to lead a pragmatic formal life, are unacceptable to them. As they are neither in a position to conform nor confront, they suffer from existentialist dilemma. As Karen Horny observes: "We cannot suppress or eliminate essential parts of ourselves without becoming estranged from ourselves… The person simply becomes oblivious to what he really is. The person loses interest in life because it is not he who lives it; he cannot make decisions because he does not know what he really wants; if difficulties mount, he may be pervaded by a sense of unreality an accentuated expression of his permanent condition of being unreal to himself" (111).

Staying within the ambit of cultural traditions and social norms fixed by society Deshpande's women always try to resolve their inner conflicts by meeting outer hassles with resolution and compromise. Deshpande once remarked: "It is necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this no further, then one becomes unhappy" (Vishwanathan, 236). Deshpande's woman is no doubt independent, bold and courageous, who

tries to revert the traditional role play though, in the process, she may have to pass through a tormenting phase of existentialist dilemma, self alienation, indignities and frustrations. The phase through which the woman of Deshpande pass, can rightly be termed as regenerative where though conformity overpowers confrontation but dissidence persists as Alan Sinfield aptly puts it thus: "Dissidence I take to imply refusal of an aspect of the dominant, without prejudicing an outcome. This may sound like a weaker claim, but I believe it is actually stronger in so far it posits a field necessary for continuing contest . . . (48-49).

Deshpande's woman, compelled to make a choice somewhere between death and life-in-death, has the guts to challenge her male counterpart. Frost-like, she wishes to assert:

> They cannot scare me with their empty spaces.
> Between starson stars void of human races.
> I have it in me so much nearer home
> To scare myself with my own desert places (*Desert Places*).

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Technique in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, *The Binding Vine* and *Small Remedies*

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Technique used by a novelist plays an important role in communicating his/her ideas to the readers. In postmodern and postcolonial era, when most of the writers are experimenting with the presentation of the contents, technique becomes an indispensable part of his/her works. Technique today is as important as the content of the novel. Times are gone when the novelists used to narrate the story chronologically. The content was of paramount importance in those days, but, with changing times the presentation of the content also gained importance. A number of modern and postmodern writers have experimented with the technique of writing. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T.S Eliot are the pioneers of this experimentation. A number of European and American writers followed suit. Likewise, many Indian writers in English have joined these writers. Among them, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie are prominent names. Many female writers have also tried their hands at experimentation, but, they could not go beyond the woman and her problems theory. Shashi Deshpande has been most successful in depicting the state of woman through the use of technique. She uses the presentation of the content effectively to unveil the dark recesses of her protagonist's mind. The unsaid is told with the help of technique by Shashi Deshpande. The present paper deals with the use of technique by Shashi Deshpande in the novels--*That Long Silence, The Binding Vine* and *Small Remedies*.

Shashi Deshpande deals with the inner turmoil and trauma of her female protagonists who suffer at the hands of male-dominated society. In order to understand the working of heroines' mind and to feel the extent of their trauma, she uses first person narrative in most of her novels. It lends empathy to the readers as well as the writer herself. The female

protagonists engage themselves in self-analysis during a period of crisis in their life. This mode of self-analysis provides the reader with a peep into the mind of the heroines. It makes their characters authentic and reliable they are true to life with all the strengths and weaknesses of ordinary human beings. No doubt, the inner recesses of the heroines' mind are revealed to the readers, but, Shashi Deshpande loses the omniscient hold over the novel. Her use of the pronoun 'I' lends credibility and authenticity to the character of the protagonists like Jaya (*That Long Silence*), Urmi (*The Binding Vine*) and Madhu (*Small Remedies*). These three women narrate their own lives and experiences. Shashi Deshpande's use of first person narrative and "Her experiment with voices gives her the freedom to narrate the story from different perspectives and bring out the innermost thoughts and feelings of characters" (Sinha and Jandial 187).

As the protagonists narrate their experiences, the inner turmoil of their minds takes over the external action of the novel. The action is less and there is movement of thought. The minds of the protagonists frequently visit past and present. The protagonists' mind present a panorama of their past as well as present life. Thus, the flash back technique is effectively used by Shashi Deshpande to express the inner self of female characters. The three protagonists-Jaya, Urmi and Madhu begin their narration in present and move back and forth in time. Sometimes past and present seem to overlap each other and create difficulties for the reader.

Almost all the novels of Shashi Deshpande begin with epigraph. The epigraphs summarize the intention and stance of the novelist. It highlights the theme of the novel. Epigraph plays an important role in epitomizing the contents of the novel. The novel *That Long Silence* begins with an extract from the speech of Elizabeth Robins: 'If I were a man and cared to know the world I lived in, I almost think it would make me a shade uneasy -the weight of that long silence of one- half of the world.' The epigraph gives an expression to Shashi Deshpande's concern with the silence of women which is an integral part of the female world and, thus, she derived the title of her novel *That Long Silence* from the epigraph. The entire novel deals with the silence of Jaya, the female protagonist. She is the representative of the entire womankind that has been suppressed since times immemorial. Similarly the novel, *The Binding Vine* begins with a quotation from Emily Bronte's novel, *Wuthering Heights*. The epigraph

states: 'What were the use of my creation, if I were entirely contained here?' The quotation directly hints at the futility of the creative genius of women. Many women write, but, their art is never allowed to be published. They are degraded as writers of womanly stuff which is presumed to be inferior to the creation of men. Sometimes they are suppressed on the account of autobiographical touches that expose men related to them in their art. The fear of men and patriarchal society force them to write stealthily. Mira in *The Binding Vine* is no exception. She was a victim of marital rape; she used to give expression to her frustration and depression through her poems and diaries. But she never wrote openly. Writing could never be used as a medium to express her inner turmoil. Similarly, the novel *Small Remedies* too begins with a quotation from *Rig Veda*, Mandala X, song 121. The epigraph states, " Father of the earth, /protect us; /Father of the sky, /protect us; /Father of the great and shining waters, /protect us, /-*To which God shall we offer our worship*?" The epigraph of the novel, *Small Remedies* does not hint directly at the story of the novel. But, it states the inability of human beings to control their destiny. It shows the helplessness of human beings that lead them into the shelter of small remedies like worship and rituals including "mango leaf *torans*, the Oms, the Swastiks, the charms and amulets" (Small Remedies 81). But these resorts fail when destiny encounters them. Man's desperate state is shown by these actions which he takes to please the supernatural power controlling the entire universe. Madhu, the protagonist of *Small Remedies* is representative of such suffering human beings. She used to do everything in order to save her child but, the destiny could not be befooled. It claimed her son Adit during his adolescence. This incident led her to study the life of Savitribai, the doyen of Indian classical music and Leela, a communist. The lives of both women helped her to come out of the grief of her son's death.

After the epigraph Shashi Deshpande expresses her aim of writing the novel and the incidents to be discussed in a short introduction. In many of her novels she neither calls it prologue, nor does she call it introduction. In the beginning of her novel, *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande's narrator makes it clear that, "I'm writing of us. Of Mohan and me" (That Long Silence 1). She declares that she is going to reveal her real self. For this she decides to detach herself. *The Binding Vine* is an exception as it starts without any prior introduction. In *Small Remedies* Shashi

Deshpande has written a prologue. Here like Greek drama, she makes the readers well acquainted with the content of the novel beforehand. Like the German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht, she believes in preparing her readers mentally for what is going to happen. In *Small Remedies*, the narrator Madhu confesses that "This is Som's story. Or rather, Joe's story as related to us by Som" (Small Remedies 1).

Shashi Deshpande also uses the dreams to unfold the un-conscious and sub-conscious minds of her protagonists. These women face certain crisis in their lives. They are heartbroken, depressed and under mental trauma. Their inability to speak out and express themselves unfolds itself in dreams. Their insecurity is communicated to the readers through their dreams. Under such turmoil their dreams are always nightmares. They do not encounter pleasant dreams. Dreams, in fact represent the real state of mind full of hidden fears and anxieties. In the novel, *That Long Silence*, the fear of widowhood or the desertion by husband is talked about. In her dream too, Jaya is afraid of losing her husband. It is the right way to acquaint the readers with the innermost and hidden thoughts that project themselves in form of dreams. Her claustrophobia too is unveiled in her dream. She dreams, "At first we were walking together. Then he goes on ahead and I am left behind . . . there is a slight sense of claustrophobia . . . I am alone, that I have been left behind" (That Long Silence 85-86). Jaya's dream is a projection of her inner self. The unspoken is communicated with the help of dreams. Similarly, the bereaved mother, Urmi feels lost at the death of her daughter in the novel, *The Binding Vine*. She feels entrapped in life. She pines for an escape, but all in vain. She is unable to come to terms with the reality. The desperate state of shattered and helpless mother is exhibited in her dream where she is unable to escape from the circumstances. Wherever she goes the bitter truth of her daughter's death follows her unconscious mind. The reality entraps her. She dreams that she has been entrapped: I am running along sea. There's someone else with me . . . and I go on . . . Now it is becoming difficult . . . Each time it is getting harder and harder to pull my feet out of bog-like softness. I labour on . . . . I can't go on . . . I can't go" (The Binding Vine 16).

In both the dreams a sense of fear, a sense of loss, a need to escape, inability to cope with circumstances are projected. But in the novel, *Small Remedies* the dream of the protagonist uncovers the guilt, the

sense of shame and a deep secret buried in the heart of Madhu. Madhu bears the yoke of the death of a man. She accuses herself for his suicide. The long forgotten incident revisits the life of Madhu in her dream as a nightmare. The unconscious mind projects itself in her dream that eventually paves way for the breach in her relations with her husband, Som. In her dream Madhu sees, "There was this sack, a gunny sack, its mouth fastened with jute string, like a bag of grains. I opened the sack . . . and there was a face looking at me, a man's face his mouth open, tongue hanging out, weals round the neck. Marks of a rope . . . the face come alive, the eyes opened, they looked at me, they saw me . . . " (Small Remedies 261). In fact, "Deshpande's emphasis on the characters has enabled her to write novels which have a strong psychological dimension. With the help of interior monologue, flashbacks into past, dreams and often doodling, she brings out the fear, frustration, anguish and yearning that lie in the innermost recesses of her character's mind " (Sinha and Jandial 191-192).

Language plays an important role, in determining the technique of a writer. Shashi Deshpande is one of the major Indian writers in English. She uses simple English in her novels. Her language is not difficult to be understood by an average Indian reader but, it can pose difficulties for a foreign reader as she uses Indian vocabulary for the relations and ceremonies. Instead of using terms like mother, father, uncle, aunt, she uses Appa, Akka, Ai, dada, Tai, Inni, Ajju, Ajji, Kaka, Kaki and so forth. The relations cannot be understood until the foreign reader is provided with a glossary. These words used by her are either of Marathi or Kannada origin. Like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and Chinua Achebe, Shashi Deshpande expresses her native culture through regional words. She uses words like kumkum, mangalsutra, Ganpati Festival, Haldi, Jagannath, Kaajal, Laddoos, Mangalagouri etc. She not only describes Indian rituals but also asserts herself as an Indian writer. It can be seen that Shashi Deshpande uses english (used by post colonial writers) and avoids standard British English.

Use of myth in her novels is also an important part of her technique. Shashi Deshpande uses myths that present women as subordinate beings to prove that the myths are also responsible for the plight of women. Perceived and presented from the patriarchal point of view, myths act as precedence for women to be docile, submissive, mute

and lifeless creatures. The myths teach women to follow and worship husband like God. Women are advised to share each sorrow and joy of their husband. Myths not only dictate but also illustrate. Shashi Deshpande makes use of women like Sita (who followed her husband to exile silently), Gandhari (who blindfolded herself to share the blindness of her husband), and Savitri (who snatched her husband back from the clutches of death). Myths are instrumental in promoting the bias on the basis of gender. Deshpande uses myths to exhort the readers to "identify the experiences of the women- the experiences which are complex by nature and are critical when rendered," for "reinterpreting, modifying, and sometimes using old myths for revealing new ideas" (Santwana Haldar 211).

In the novels, *That Long Silence, The Binding Vine* and *Small Remedies*, the women suffer from a kind of neurosis as they bereave the death of their children. Two of the protagonists Jaya (*That Long Silence*) and Madhu (*Small Remedies*) take the refuge of writing. They express themselves, and come to terms with reality in writing. While Jaya writes stories related to women and purges herself, Madhu writes the biograpbhy of the doyen of Indian classical music, Savitribai Indorkar. The struggle of Bai and Leela, Madhu's aunt lends her power and desire to live. Similarly, in *The Binding Vine,* Mira, the dead mother-in-law of Urmi, engaged herself in writing poems and diary entries. She expresses herself and her feelings through these poems and diaries as women were not allowed to express themselves freely. Thus, the women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande use writing as means to express or purge themselves. Deshpande uses writing within her novels to assert herself and inspire other women to express themselves. But this assertion does not mean that she expects or hints at a radical attitude. She wants women to be a part of the institution called marriage and spend life with self-assertion because "She never uses her writing as a mode of resistance. Words never come to her to express a radical break and declaration of self and independence" (W.S. Kotiswari 105).

Shashi Deshpande open-ended novels provide an opportunity to the readers to interpret the novels according to their own will. Though there is no particular conclusion, yet, she suggests reconciliation towards the end of the novel. The reconciliation always hints at Deshpande's belief in marriage. She wants the females to assert themselves within marriage.

Her optimistic attitude is evident from the conclusion of her novels. The female protagonists, no doubt decide to start life afresh with their husbands, but, at the same time they decide to assert themselves and find their identity in their profession. Jaya in *That Long Silence* awaits Mohan, decides to break her silence and start a new life with Mohan. In *The Binding Vine,* Urmi helps Mira and Shakutai speak and she herself realizes that escapism is no solution to any problem. The love binds a person to the human race and it is impossible to cut the connection between the two. The love and care for other human beings are substitute to escape. Similarly, Madhu in *Small Remedies* decides to start life with her husband once again.

Thus, it can be seen that Shashi Deshpande, a postmodern novelist makes an effective use of technique in her novels. Unlike the traditional novelists, she follows flashback technique, dream sequence, a female narrator, an amalgam of first person and third person narration, a crisis in the life of protagonist leading to her determination to face the circumstances, writing as a refuge and the open ends of the novels. These techniques lend her a unique position as a novelist. Though she has been criticized for the use of similar content and technique, yet, her presentation bags her unique position as a postmodern novelist who expresses herself in excellent manner through technical devices.

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Culture and Identity: Reading Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist* and *Transmission*

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The scope of diaspora writing asks for expansion beyond the limited periphery of India to the unlimited boundary of the world because the social culture of man always seems to overpower the individual. Wherever a man goes in the world his social culture moves with him like his shadow as he is mainly identified by his hyphened identity.

Hari Kunzru, a master storyteller, has successfully portrayed the dialectics of the individual and social culture at the juncture of identity crisis his protagonists undergo. Hari Kunzru moves gracefully and logically from the narrower to broader, from personal to general and from closer to expansive scope of identity that suffers the backlash of societal rigidity and clutches of regional ethnicity. Kunzru deals with the complex and ever-changing nature of identity enigmatically and mystically in the delineation of Pran Nath and Arjun Mehta in *The Impressionist* and *Transmission*.

The main concern of these two works is the dialectics of belongingness to one's homeland and the adopted land. Human beings are not like some piece of baggage which could be transferred from one destination to another without any feeling attached. Whenever there is any change in place it is bound to affect their psyche in multiple ways and compel the defensive mechanisms to come to the fore or otherwise displacement would become a story of pain and withdrawal. The evolving aspect of identity helps the diaspora to some to terms with his need and tendency of settlement but not assimilation. Hari Kunzru's protagonists are cultural beings who realize the pain of the lack; when away from home, they compromise with their situation but never indulge whole-heartedly. Homelands, cultural myths, histories (personal and national), language, memories and nostalgia, gradually change into reminders

and push the diaspora towards a desire to belong but not to assimilate. In the words of Homi K. Bhabha,'…. such contradictions and conflicts, which often thwart political intentions and make the question of commitment and complex difficult, are rooted in the process of translation and displacement in which the object of politics is inscribed. The effect is not stasis or a sapping of the will. It is, on the contrary, the spur of the negotiation of socialist democratic politics and policies which demand that questions of organization are theorized and socialist theory is 'organized' because there is no given community or body of the people whose inherent, radical historicity emits the right signs'. (p.26)

Hari Kunzru makes his diasporic protagonists break the fringes of cultural and geographical barriers and become the 'citizens of the world', who do not belong to any particular culture but gradually attain a non-cultural identity. In the course of the novel they become successful in adopting any identity to suit their purpose. Gradually and circumstantially, they learn to acquire any culture, religion or language and can easily change their identity. The hitch and the pain of attaining a new identity was more at the initial stage which later on becomes a bygone tale for them. Homi Bhabha illumines such a situation in these words: 'The shifting margins of cultural displacement- that confounds any culture or an 'organic' intellectual- and ask what the function of a committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigmatic place of departure'. (p.21) The original or the basic identity gets so overlapped by other identities that the real person is lost somewhere and what is left behind is just a sponge which can easily absorb or squeeze one identity after another at its convenience.

Pran Nath, in *The Impressionist* is a high caste Hindu Kashmiri Brahmin (Razdans) who is thrown out of his house for being an illegitimate child of an Englishman. His mother, at the time of her marriage, happened to cross path with an English officer. The master and the real heir of the Razdan house, Pran Nath, suddenly and shockingly was disowned by the family, in his early teens for being illegitimate. In the blink of an eye, his own house, his own culture, language and the religion became alien to him. The Anglo-Indians refused to own him whereas the Englishman looked at him

demeaningly. He found himself at a juncture where he had no identity and the one he knew and owned so proudly became unreal to him. Hence, Pran Nath, who once sat on the highest pedestal of societal hierarchy, was thrown to the lowest level. Hindu religion and Hindu society is orthodox and rigid which strictly believes in the concepts of ritual purity and impurity. The mingling of the blood, especially with foreigners is a crime which it had never accepted. The houseless, religionless, in other words, identityless lad moved ahead on the heroic journey of the on-going evolution of his position in this world.

Internally, Pran Nath gets shattered but later on he gathers himself back in the identity of an Englishman as Jonathan Bridgeman. Hari Kunzru here stresses the point that social culture has a great impact in making the identity of a person. His culture did not let him adjust with the intermediate position as an Anglo-Indian in the society and ultimately he became a complete Englishman. Pran Nath got disoriented and took the identities of Rukhsana, white boy and Bobby during his journey to acquire the complete identity of an Englishman. Finally, he got the opportunity which he most willing grabbed and reached London as Jonathan Bridgeman. But destiny took him from there to Africa where he became an impressionist and undertook a never-ending journey of a diaspora which had no final destination. The flexible aspects of identity made him a citizen of the world who can adopt, adjust, and settle in any identity which does not need to get concretized and the wheel of can ask any change for which he is ever ready. The same dilemma is evident in Kunzru's next novel also.

Arjun Mehta is a software engineer in *Transmission*. He had high hopes about his future in America. His merit and talent as software engineer were creditable but his hopes get deflated when he once reaches America and finds numerous people like him waiting to get a foothold in this land of the plenty. His self-esteem gets crushed and he finds himself at the mercy of aliens. But going back to India was impossible because of the prestige of his parents in the Indian society. After getting displaced from India, Arjun realizes the value and place of his culture and country in his own views. He is a middle class Indian who because of the effect of English education belongs to “a group who were alienated to varying degrees, from the nature tradition” whom Uma Parameswaran calls 'native aliens.'(p.21)

But as a diasporic in America, he becomes a dutiful, religious and hardworking expatriate who has built a working India in his own room and even on his computer. The pictures of Bollywood actresses replace the pictures of actresses from Hollywood which were his obsession when he was in India. The views of Uma Parameshwaram are noteworthy here in the immigrant's journey of assimilation:

"The first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is so busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is when immigrants start taking part in the shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethno- cultural issues. The fourth is when they have 'arrived' and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (p.305)

Arjun Mehta, being a first generation expatriate prefers to live in the memories of his native land and mingles only with the other Indian immigrants. Soon, Hari Kunzru provides him with the attributes of the second stage of diaspora where he tries to adjust himself in the alien environment. His friendship with Chris and his objectionable comments on her lifestyle is his entering the third stage of adjustment. Ultimately, he realizes that he can reach a comfortable level of understanding and intimacy only with someone who is an Indian. But his hacking of the computers world-wide by the nine viruses of his favorite Indian actress, Leela Zahir, and his subsequent identification by American police makes him flee around the world. The closed identity of an Indian Hindu boy expands and now knows no boundary or barriers of country, religion, culture and language.

Hari Kunzru tries to suggest that the time has arrived when the future citizens of the world will be the diasporics who belong to all cultures and are flexible to assume different identities. Pran Nath and Arjun Mehta, who seem to enjoy the status of world citizens, rise above the local culture and attain global culture which is a result of mingling and interacting of different cultures. In the end, I would like to add that Kunzru reminds us of Lord Krishana's theory of non-attachment which stands true in the case of both Pran Nath and Arjun Mehta.

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Narrative Stained in Blood: A Critical Analysis of Indira Goswami's *Pages Stained with Blood*

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Indian society has often been convulsed by communal riots which keep recurring for diverse reasons. Riots tend to expose not only the fragile nature of communal harmony in our country; they also bring us face to face with naked brutality and violence which leave thousands traumatized. Literary writers have to evolve new narrative techniques and strategies to represent atrocity and trauma. Literary mediation leads to representing this brutal reality indirectly through the use of metaphors, symbols and tropes. It is not merely the representation of individual lives which have been traumatized; it is not merely the stark representation of atrocity and violence which is important, what assumes great importance is how representation works. The present paper looks at the representation of 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the country in Indira Goswami's book *Pages Stained with Blood* (2002).

An ideal democracy is visualized as a secular sovereign state having the power to protect rights of all citizens. India is the largest democracy of the world and the constitution of the country declares that it is a secular sovereign state. But from time to time India has succumbed to communal riots for reasons as varied as lack of civic ties among different communities, personal disputes acquiring communal character, reactions to perceived grievances or out of dissent. The reasons for communal riots may seem to be superficial and trivial, but often there are underlying deeper considerations of political and religious representation, control of and access to resources and power. In fact, one cannot but agree with Bapsi Sidhwa when she avers, "It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves and the next day they are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christian. People shrink dwindling into symbols." (*Ice-Candy Man*, 93).

The roots of communal violence in the post independence period can be traced back to India's partition in 1947. The political situation as it emerged in the postcolonial India brought the entire fabric of Indian society under tremendous strain. Separatist movements in Punjab, North-east, Jammu and Kashmir and divisive and centrifugal tendencies in different parts of the country have led to violence in various forms. "Religion, as Shashi Tharoor suggests, "also breeds what we in this country call 'communalism'- the sense of religious chauvinism that transforms itself into bigotry and sometimes violence, against the followers of other faiths."(*Riot* 44). Following the assassination of the then Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi on 31st October 1984, anti-Sikh riots broke out in almost all parts of the country. This was unprecedented because despite many Sikh leaders asserting their separate identity, the Sikhs and Hindus had always lived very peacefully with each other. These dirty warts on India's body politic have made people sit up and try to find out reasons as to why they occured. Since riots are momentous events, the literary writers have also tired to come to grips with them in their own way by interweaving reality and fiction and by showing how violence and trauma affect both the perpetrator and the victim. According to Cathy Caruth "The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive." (*Trauma*: *Explorations in Memory* 63).

Originally published in Assamese as *Tej Aru Dhulire Dhushorito Prishta,* Goswami's text was later translated into English by Pradip Acharaya as *Pages Stained with Blood*. It depicts the gory Sikh pogrom in Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in October, 1984. Indira Goswami reacts to the bloodshed and the savagery that followed the Prime Minister's assassination and weaves a powerful tale of mindless violence and human frailties. The story follows a young Assamese author who teaches at the University of Delhi. She is busy writing a book on Delhi and regularly jots downs anything that crosses her mind. The Operation Blue Star at the Golden Temple in Amritsar brings sudden twist to the novel and the protagonist plunges headlong into crisis since most of the people she is close to are Sikhs. At last, her book is drenched in the blood of the victims and she loses all her recorded material. With her dream to write a book on the exotica of the Mughal Empire and British Raj remaining unaccomplished, what she ended up

writing was a very personal painful experience of the carnage from a close perspective. A narrative, which is an outburst against victimization and the resulting trauma:

> …. I leave for Guwahati on 20 November, 1984, my desire to write the book on Delhi, painting in broad swaths of colour the days and lives of the Moghuls and the British Raj, remaining unfulfilled and the two wooden boxes of Balbir still with me, a small, steady hope in a corner of my heart maybe he still will come back one day (8).

The focus is not on the upper strata of the Sikh society, rather the text deals with ordinary Sikhs of the streets. She tries to delineate the contemporary Sikh milieu, as these ordinary Sikh characters struggle to cope with communal upheaval. The three people who have become a part of her family are Santokh Singh, Balbir Singh, and the Sikh Baba. Santokh Singh, an auto rickshaw driver, drove her to the University and also to the narrow lanes of the old Delhi, to collect information for her book on the ancient Delhi. He is her silent admirer, who is ready to risk anything for her. She is also aware of this. "I knew that he was ready to sacrifice his life for me" (36). Balbir Singh, the *raddiwala*, came every Saturday and Sunday morning to buy old newspapers and books, sometimes accompanied by his son, Sonu, to pull the cart. In his free time, he narrates tales about old Delhi from the accounts of Chautursen. "Bibiji, you take out your notebook. My day's work is over. I'll tell you the story of Chandani Chowk." (18). He has left two boxes of his savings with her before going to Punjab, which she keeps reluctantly. The Sikh Baba, a refugee from Dera Ismail, Pakistan is a loner, who stands like a statue near the *gol chakkar* in front of the protagonist's house. She meets him almost every day on her way to and from the university. She tries talking to him but he only mumbles something as a reply to her Namaste. Later Balbir tells her that Nanak Singh Bhalla or the Sikh Baba was a dry fruit merchant. His daughter was brutally raped and murdered during the partition and nobody has ever heard him speak since that day.

> "He just stands there, rooted to the spot. I'm steadily

> becoming convinced that life is nothing but a long string of partings -a journey of separations. It's unbearable for some of us" (28).

The entire discourse of humanism constructs the human to be rational, divine and angelic with all the good qualities and moral values we associate with being human. But communal riots make us confront the bestiality of the 'other' that we carry within us. The confrontation with the other within us silences us and the narration of our own bestiality poses a challenge. Tropes are what often come to our rescue. Through the pages of the novel, Indira Goswami, narrates a poignant story of bloodshed and savagery by using metaphors and tropes. Blood, is the most important metaphor used by the writer to say something that is actually unsayable. The inhumanity is at its peak when the blood of the fellow beings is nothing more than a red stain "I see two more turbans on the road at the Shakti Nagar crossing and stains of blood, like dried paan juice." (131). Red colour of the blood, depicting bestiality in humans fills up the whole atmosphere. "The reddish tint in the morning sky makes it look like a rag dripping blood over Delhi." (141). At this juncture blood has only one meaning for the perpetrators revenge "Blood for blood" (137). They were the same people with whom their victims had shared all their joys and sorrows over all these years. In the end of novel, the pages of the protagonist's diary, which carry the heart and soul of Delhi, are metaphorically stained with the blood of innocent Sikhs. "The Sikhs fidget and my notebook, kept on a corner table, falls down on the sticky matter. But it is too dark to see what is on the floor." (139). Many areas of the country had witnessed "Communal disturbances" but Delhi had never ever had seen such an ugly face of violence, a vengeful cycle of action and reaction

The character of The Sikh Baba, a victim of 1947 partition, who has not uttered a word since the day her daughter was abducted and killed, symbolizes that the time has not moved on. The atrocities inflicted on the innocent victims had once again brought us face to face with everything that is non-human. "He just stands there, rooted to the spot" (28). The unbridled chaos and mayhem of the partition had revisited the country. The pain and humiliation of an epic scale was again felt in the country. Once again an innocent commoner became the

victim of religious intolerance. Once again thousands were left homeless and dislocated, struggling hard to cope up with the trauma and the agony of human brutality. Ironically, the people who had initiated and instigated such a pogrom are cocooned in a safe zone, totally unaffected by the trauma.

> "Almost all the houses in that block have been destroyed, only a few still remain standing the house of the local MLA stands amidst the charred and blackened remains like a white crow in the middle of a flock of black crows." (148)

Goswami highlights another heroic trait of the victims; even in the midst of crisis there are people who maintain their self respect and dignity by not getting allured by the possessions they believe are not theirs. Balbir's wife refuses to accept the savings of her husband which he had left with the writer. "Money, Balbir had given them to me for safekeeping. Take them. They are yours." The woman looks straight at me for me for some time and then bursts out, wailing, "Balbir has said nothing about this to me. I cannot keep them." (152). The narrative brings out a harsh reality to the forefront that the impact of atrocities and brutality is not only the people directly affected by it but it is also on the others who are associated with the victims and even those who hear and read about such inhumanity:

> "The wooden boxes with me become heavier and heavier. When one's enthusiasm is lost, everything seems heavy The stench of blood and stale sweat spreads in the air." (153)

Goswami's book is a timely reminder that the tragic 1984 pogrom where more than 3000 Sikhs were lynched or doused with kerosene and burned alive, 4000 children were orphaned, thousands of women widowed, 50,000 people displaced, calls for far greater public attention and collective moral scrutiny. Even after three decades, the rehabilitation and resettlement of the riot victims has been far from satisfactory. Rather than showing empathy towards victims and helping

them pick up pieces of their life, the political parties have been playing petty politics and have been merely using them as vote banks. Even the intervention of courts in this matter has not made much difference. To add insult to the grievous injury the judicial process to convict and punish the culprits has been painstakingly slow: A perfect case of justice delayed is justice denied. Twenty eight years have passed and hardly any significant convictions, even those convicted are mere foot soldiers and the real perpetrators still enjoy powerful positions. The blot can never be erased. The suggestions to the victims are to "Move On or Get Over". But somebody has to explain to these victims how to move on or get over. Indira Goswami's book may not be a prescription for how to get over, her tortuous narration does underscore the fact that narrating atrocity not only calls for extraordinary skills, the text also serves as a reminder of the skeletons in our immediate backyard which keep raising their heads from time to time.

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Socio-Anthropological Considerations in *Parva* by S.L. Bhyrappa

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The Indian epics as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are not just literary works. In fact, they are among the most important documents of ancient Indian culture and the source of a living tradition. Moreover, they continue to remain relevant to the contemporary Indian ethos age after age. That is why over the centuries they have allured the creative genius and the critical mind of India. They have been read and re-read time and again. Extensive research has been conducted into their several versions to ascertain the authenticity of the text. A lot of intensive scholarly scrutiny has also been directed at them to discover fresh insights and obtain a deeper understanding of the wisdom they contain. As a result a wealth of the critical analyses has grown around them. *Parva* is the yet another creative attempt that continues this celebrated tradition of re-weaving and regenerating the masterpiece in a more relevant literary garb largely in tune with the sensibility of a given age and its readerly preferences.

Parva, a masterpiece by Dr. S. L. Bhyrappa, one of the most famous Indian writers writing in Kannada today, reflects this very contemporary quality of socio-anthropology. It is this essential quality which distinguishes *Parva* from the **Vyasbharata,** the original source of the *Mahabharata* myth on which *Parva* is based, and of which five different versions were supposedly created by the disciples of Vyas. It is to be noted at this stage that it is not merely the intention of the author to re-tell [1] the story of the *Mahabharata***,** but to offer a perspective on a community living at a particular time and place, which can be seen through contemporary consciousness. He probably wanted a form with which to find within the broad framework of the *Mahabharata* tale answers to those questions such as death, sexuality and relationship between man and man, which

had been haunting him for a long time.

Richer and subtler than most conventional narrative forms and fined tuned to the sensibility of the age, the contemporary novel as a genre has been fed and strengthened by the findings of modern psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and other branches of study focusing on problems of both individual and universal nature. Bhyrappa's creative sensibility as a novelist cannot be seen an exception to such influences given by his academic background and his deep grounding in philosophy, the impact of contemporary influences however subtle cannot be ruled out. Although in an interview, Bhyrappa has gone on record that in *Parva***,**[2] he had no anthropological or psychological view, but only an experimental view to offer. To a large extent his novel belies his observation. Perhaps he might not have consciously '*used*' the critical and interpretative insights one finds in the novel, but yet to a perceptive mind they are evident in his work. As such, it would be interesting to view *Parva* in the light of socio-anthropological insight and approach, which is essentially a contemporary thinking. It has an important angle from which a reader can find useful insights and critical perception into *Parva*. There are clues and evidences in the novel to indicate that the novelist seeks useful insight into the life and predicament of his characters from the socio-anthropological angle. As such it seeks to define the worldly reality of human existence as revealed from the social surface. However, it has to be remembered that Bhyrappa has expressed on more than one occasion, which his pre-occupation was not with the surface reality, but with the deeper mystery of human life.

As such, analyzing the *Parva* with the help of socio-anthropological perceptions in the context of Indian culture and thinking would be more appropriate. This could throw valuable light on our understanding of the events and characters of the novel in the appropriate context in which they are created and are probably meant to be perceived. An analysis of the *Parva* from several viewpoints available through the multiple socio-anthropological contexts, we find evidence enough in *Parva* to deduce that not only man's physical features and mental make-up, but also to a large extent his behaviour and personal traits are inherited. Further, there is a rule to deduce on the basis of the novel that one's constitutional needs such as food, clothing and shelter are also picked up largely from his progenitors or ancestors and his racial

background. Interestingly, his individual temperament which governs the strengths and weaknesses of his character is also to a great extent shaped by both his social surroundings as well as racial origins. The convergence of a large number of tribes and the intermingling of the persons belonging to varied racial stocks in *Parva* facilitates this observation. For instance, the Rakshasa tribes, inhabiting the dense forest region have men and women with greater heights, rougher builds and more animal strength than their counterparts among other racial groups, who live in a less challenging and less hostile environment. The tribe comparable to them in the above respect is the Deva tribe which is also exposed to an unfriendly environment with regard to the terrain and severe climatic conditions.

Yet several of the human traits are inherited genetically. As such Ghatotkacha, Bhima's son from Salakatankati has a huge body with even more enormous appetite as compared to the other sons of Salakatankati from her Rakshasa mates. Apparently although Ghatotkacha had inherited the Rakshasa traits mainly from his Rakshasi mother Salakatankati, he inherited the Aryan physique and stature from his Aryan father Bhima who was himself the son of a Deva individual- and that individual- a giant among Devas. Apparently Ghatotkacha's temperament seems to be more Rakshasa-like, as also his values appear to be dominated by the Rakshasa value system. This is evident from his initial inclination to join the hostile Rakshasa tribes in battle against the Pandavas. This is natural as he is brought up in a purely Rakshasa environment. As against this Salakatankati seems to be greatly influenced by Aryan values in her loyalty to her husband, and the defence of her marital clan against its enemies. This is a subtle reflection of how an individual can differ temperamentally and emotionally on being exposed to alien socio-cultural influences, irrespective of his or her upbringing.

Another illustration from *Parva* will also highlight the difference between the Rakshasas and the Aryans. We are told in *Parva* that the Rakshasas in the forest ate raw flesh lived in the trees and did not cover their body fully. While their attitude to food, clothing and shelter is considered as unrefined by the Aryan standards, the Rakshasas themselves find nothing wrong in their natural way of life. In fact, it is apparent from *Parva* that they would not have been happy in any other way of living. Further, despite the change in their way of life, it is unlikely that they would be acceptable to the Aryan as their equals. The example

of Bhima's wife Salakatankati is sufficient evidence of this. Despite her spontaneous love for Bhima, her willingness to adopt Aryan ways and customs as also her dedication as a daughter-in-law to Kunti, we see that she still remains unacceptable to the latter.

Thus, another example in *Parva* of the influence of physical environment and racial stock on the make as also the behaviour of the individual and his social conditions is of the Deva tribe. Deva people are seen to be handsome and fair skinned. They are sturdy, brave warriors and are also developed in the art of weaponry, statecraft medicine and so on. Since they belong to high altitude regions, the cold climate and mild sun greatly influences their physique, appearance, food habits and socio-economic needs. The climate also conditions their temperament and cultural evolution, there by shaping social institutions like marriage, family as well as their value system.

To take an individual example, we can see in *Parva,* how Aryan Bhima's temperament is conditioned by his Aryan descent and his inheritance of values of maternal love, filial duty imparted by his Aryan upbringing. These remain basically unchanged even after a year-long matrimonial alliance with Salakatankati, a Rakshasi, who belongs to a different racial group and has a different value system. This is evident from the Aryan values, which he continues to nurse and among which the idea of Aryan superiority is significantly dominant. As a result, he suffers from guilt at a later stage of self-perception for having neglected his loving wife Salakatankati and their son Ghatotkacha who has been starved of paternal love as due to Bhima's decision to sacrifice his Rakshasa family for his Aryan family. There is a clear indication of Bhima's mental turbulence born of his realisation of his split familial loyalties as a result of racial differences in the following passage where he distressfully remembers,

> *"I did not nurture him, bring him up as a son. I did not help develop his blood,muscles and bones. Wasn't it better to go back than to ask him to sacrifice that body, I had not cared to nourish, sacrifice it in my cause for my sake?"(Parva 165)*

The above passage reveals Bhima as a normally conscientious person who has been made to sacrifice his paternal and spousal

obligations at the altar of Aryan values which are at least in this case in variance with the universal human values. Ironically, Bhima is able to silence his conscience probably because his loyalty has been 'trained' to direct itself to the family to which he is born.

As against this, the Rakshasa value system though crude and rustic in the eyes of civilized Aryans, is competent enough to adequately handle the crisis created by Bhima's de-facto desertion of his nonAryan wife and new born son. For the Rakshasas, the so-called desertion by the father is harsh but acceptable reality of life to be faced pragmatically or practically. As an individual Salakatankati is grieved by his departure but waits like an Aryan wife loyally for his return, when she could have easily married again with the full approval of her Rakshasa tribe and in accordance to their norms. However, as a responsible Rakshasa ruler, she ensures that she begets sons from other Rakshasa men, as a part of her obligation as the tribal chief.

On the other hand, we have in *Parva* the Aryan Kunti suffering from insecurity and anxiety over the loss of cultural identity inspite of being physically secure and well looked after among the Rakshasa. She says, "*No matter, how secure and fearless our life here, no Aryan food or clothes. If we stayed here longer we shall become indistinguishable from Rakshasas"* (*Parva* 261).

It is this fear of loss of cultural identity that drives Kunti away from an extremely loving, dutiful and considerate Rakshasi daughter-in-law towards a perilous onward journey faced with the fear of detection from Kauravas, into the territory of other dangerous and hostile Rakshasa tribe. As against this, Bhima's wife does not nurture any such fears of cultural invasion or elimination when she decides to take an Aryan as her husband. This difference in the temperament of the two women may be partly explained away as psychological even circumstantial. But it cannot be denied that it is shaped to a large extent by their ethnic as well as environmental characteristics. One has reasons to believe thus, because the author makes sufficient room to indicate that individual's response to a given situation is generated to a greater extent on the basis of their physical or mental constitution rather than on the basis of their upbringing.

We see in *Parva* that the Aryans as a race, seem to a have evolved a peculiar value system pertaining to love, sex and marriage. During

Niyoga Kunti is constantly working *under Pandu's orders* and for giving Kuru lineage '*strong warrior sons.*' For Pandu, there should be no emotional involvement of the concerned in such sex. In fact, Pandu makes Kunti promise that she '*would not fall in love with the Deva who was expected to sow his sperm*' (*Parva* 77) in her womb. This attitude to love and sex is reflected in marriage too. We notice that, to begin with, even Arjuna was extremely happy in the company of Ulupi. But after his initial sex urge was gratified by the Naga girl, he conveniently remembered Panchali. He reminiscences at a later stage,

> *"But then I remembered again Panchali's fierce vow. Here was the companionship, which did not get exhausted with sex. Even when I watched her lying down silently, her body transmitted meanings. Panchali, was no mere a sex object, she was a person, a human companion even after this sex frenzy subsided. Then I didn't see all this. I sensed dumbly the difference between Panchali and Ulupi. But I understood more explicitly the limitations of Ulupi. (Parva 261*).

This may seem to be the reflection of an emotional bond or psychological companionship between a man and wife. But it indicates more than meets the eye. Why could Arjuna not conjure up a similar bond with Ulupi or any of his several non-Aryan wives during his exile? It is because of temperamental differences no doubt. But also because this temperament is greatly shaped by the cultural pattern of a given tribe and that in turn is shaped by the physical, natural environment in which a social group lives and evolves.

One more example in this context which can be effectively demonstrated is of a statement of Chitra, who reveals the secret of Kamsa's birth to Yuyudhana. It marks once again the indeniable difference between an Aryan woman and a Rakshasa woman. Kamsa was born to Ugrasena's wife from Drumila, the half-Rakshasa. In *Parva*, we see that Drumila was willing to take her away with him after their relationship was known to Ugrasena. But Kamsa's mother refused the proposal. Chitra says of her,

> "*But after all wasn't she an Aryan woman? The Aryadharma lays down the law that a woman cannot desert her husband and run away with another man. She cited the dharma, and saying that fate had written that on her forehead, she began to weep. She stayed back. But in the Rakshasa dharma a woman is allowed to go with joy even with a man who had killed her husband. The main thing for them is to win the heart and mind of the woman"* (*Parva* 345).

The substantiation of this point can be also found in Bhima's reminiscences concerning the difference between his Rakshasi wife Salakatankati and Aryan wife Draupadi. He says of Salakatankati,

> "*A companion in every act, in hunting, swimming, running in the bamboo shelter, on the tree-top, and while escaping from the wild elephants coming for us she had the strength to nurse her husband like a child and love making with her gave the same pleasure as wrestling with a rival of equal strength and skill. But with Krishne not even a day went like this and she was a gentle, soft creature, a flower one should hold and smell with utmost care lest it wither, all her skill and power were confined to words and their tricky world, in the bend of her eye-brows, in the silence of her tears. She never invaded my body like Salakatankati, one had to read her desires and hopes in the changing light of her eyes, or else one was doomed to total incomprehension and I was told this was the ideal for an Aryan wife" (Parva* 135).

We notice here that, there are universal traits of womanhood such as need for love, security and companionship common to all females. But their temperament which responds to these several needs differently is controlled to a large extent by the social environment in which they grow and in particular by the norms that are set by that environment. In several examples, we find in *Parva* that the author offers a convincing portrayal of war skills employed by different tribes and shows how to a

large extent they are shaped by their socio- environmental context..

In a socio-anthropological approach to the novel, it would be extremely relevant to examine the status and the position of individuals on the basis of their respective roles as progenitor and progeny. It will be also useful here to analyse the significance of this role on the basis of the gender of the individuals in question. The novelist has himself thrown up a basis for such analysis through the linkage of '*beeja*' (the seed) and '*kshetra*' (the field) to the issues in question. The theory of '*beeja*' and '*kshetra*' assumes a great significance when we see it in the case of not just the ordinary men and women, but of men of learning and penance who have renounced the worldly life. The ordinary Aryans whether Brahmins, Kshatriyas or others, invariably followed the patriachal system where the male descent and paternal lineage pre-dominated. The sons bear the name of the father and perpetuate the family tree. The more interesting is the case in *Parva* of the Rishis in whom at times their maleness becomes dominant and seeks release in impulsive co-habitation with a woman not always of high birth. In most of such cases, the Rishis are seen to be greatly concerned that their high-calibre seed should not be wasted in a poor quality '*field*' or '*kshetra*'. The woman, it can be seen, is utilised in such cases as a mere medium of birth. At best she is permitted to nurse the child through its infancy. But often she is denied her legitimate maternal contribution to the upbringing and the future status of her progeny. The child's destiny is planned by the father and the future position is also conditioned by the father's present position.

For example, the great sage Bhardwaj begot an issue of a potter woman and he took him away from his mother at the age of five saying,

> *"This is a child created by me. There is none but this boy who can succeed me in preserving and propagating my learning and knowledge, please hand him over to me, I shall take him"* (*Parva* 537-38).

In the same way, we find in *Parva* how, Saradwanta of yore produced Kripa and Kripi through a tribal woman and he accepted them as his children making them Brahmins. In fact, Krupa's future development becomes lop-sided probably because he is deprived of the essential nurture that could have come from his tribal mother.

In another instance, the distinguished sage Parasura was infatuated by the beauty of fisher woman Satyavati. He spent a few days with her and impregnated her. Then he said farewell to her and returned after eight years to take his son with him. The dark boy was named Krishnadvaipavana, who was later made into one of the greatest experts in vedic lore by his father.

Krishnadvaipavana also had a son named Shukadeva from the womb of a ravishing Apasara. Apparently this son stayed on with his father in *Parva*. Later Shukadeva became a greater genius than his father. and amassed a wealth of knowledge through his wanderings in several countries.

These several examples in *Parva* go to show that '*the seed determined the nature of the fruit*' but one can notice in *Parva* that the case of 'the children who belonged essentially to father' was only among the brahmin community and apparently not Kshatriya community. The one exception to this general rule of the Brahmin rishi taking his off-spring away with his is of Durvasa who is instrumental in begetting Karna, but not returning for his issue. There is a rationale offered in *Parva* for this. When Kuntibhoja, Prutha's father comes "*to participate in the ritual fire ceremony, the sage himself informed [him] Kuntibhoja, You will have a grandson out of wedlock"(Parva 67)*. Obviously this future issue was expected to be a glorious heir to Kuntibhoja's Kshatriya lineage. But subsequently we find that this child is deserted by the Kshtriya clan on the pretext that "*the sages are old-fashioned and outdated*" (67-68). The kings and princes in the palace produced many children from their servant-maids, who were given as gifts by other kings or who came as companions with the brides of the kings. It was the accepted custom among the Kshatriyas of Aryan community to have such sexual alliances. Children born of such alliances were brought up as a different community called Sutas. In *Parva*, Dhritarastra, the father of Duryodhana sired only fourteen children of Gandhari and all the rest of his children were born to servant maids.

Ironically the kings of the Aryan community sniffed the head of the children and accepted them as their sons only when the children were born to their queens through their seeds.

In another example, Karna also remembers all the sages who accepted the children born through the lower caste woman as their sons. He wonders,

> "*If this is so, then why didn't the Kshatriyas accept as Kshatriya children they produced through the woman of a cultivator community, but set them apart as a separate and inferior called Sutas? Why didn't they accept their children as their own?"*

In another instance the sage Krishnadvipavana has to perform *Niyoga* on Ambe and Ambalika, the wives of Vichitraveerya, who died heirless at an early age. The servant maid of the queens teaches the right method of *Niyoga* to the ascetic Krishnadvaipavana and also carries his seed in her womb. She says,

> "*The seed that you have sown in my womb would grow into the son of a servant-maid in the palace. That means he will be a Suta. But your seed I have received for my own pleasure and profit. Will you please tell your mother that once the early rearing of the mother is over, you will take the child away to be educated and brought up by you? Revered one, I do not want my child to turn to be a Suta. And especially the child from your seed. If he turns to be a Brahmin, I shall consider myself purified …These Kshatriyas sow their seeds whenever they will but refuse to admit the offspring into their fold"* (*Parva* 595-96).

However, in *Parva* we see that, there is an interesting aspect to the Kshatriyas' approach to the *Niyoga*'. They accept such the progeny born to their wives or daughters-in-law out of wedlock through othermen as their own children, when the husband is unable to sire the children because of his sickness or due to impotence as in Pandu's case, or when the husband is dead as in the case of Vichitraveerya. In all such cases, the women was permitted to undergo the practice of *Niyoga* with the consent of her husband if he were alive, or of the in-laws if the husband were dead. This legitimized the status of the child thus born as the legal heir to the throne. It is important to mention here that progeny-especially male children-was essential to that patriachal society to perpetuate the lineage and the ruling dynasty. This must have created

the practice of *Niyoga*.

For example, Dhritrastra and Pandu were themselves issues born out of Niyoga. Interestingly Vidura, their half-brother born to a non-Kshatriya woman does not qualify as the heir to the throne inspite of being physically fit, learned born of the same man Krishnadvaipavana as Pandu and Dhritarastra were born.

At this juncture, it is useful to draw attention to the male dominance in the Aryan community, wherein patriachal system existed. In contrast to this a matriarchal system, existed among the tribals in the foothills of the Himalayas. There was a custom among them where by the children born to a woman, belonged to her mother's family.

In *Parva* for instance, we see**,** that Bhishma's mother Ganga belongs to this hilly tribe. Shantanu, a Kuru king falls in love with her and agrees to the custom keeping the children at her mother's place. Ganga goes to her mother's place for every delivery, leaves the children there and comes back. It is only when the king finds this loss of male heirs intolerable that Bhishma stays back and Ganga, unable to accept his terms, deserts the king.

Particularly in the context of our own times, the relevance of these episodes becomes highly significant. We live in the age of complexity and it is noteworthy that *Parva* has been able to capture in a nutshell, the inevitable dichotomy of our predicament. Thus, wide-ranging epic like the *Mahabharata* has assumed the contemporary novelistic garb in the hands of Bhyrappa which is much appreciable and credible for this age.

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Theme of Existentialism in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*

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Arun Joshi ranks among the leading Indian English novelists who were predominant in the second half of the twentieth century. By virtue of his rich thematic design and a skillful tapestry of narrative techniques, Joshi produces a unique space for himself in the galaxy of Indian English novelists. His fictional corpus presents thought-provoking and serious themes such as existential crisis of modern man, futility and hollowness of civilized society, modem man's longing for primitive values and so on. While Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao concentrate, by and large, on the social scenario, Joshi's main thrust is to probe into the inner recesses of his protagonists.. Arun Joshi "takes his place alongside Anita Desai as the best of the new Indo-Anglian writers" (Melwani 1977:68). His main thrust is on the individual psyche of the protagonist throughout his five novels. Exceptionally perceptive as a creative artist, he has brought out five novels*The Foreigner (1968), The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1971), The Apprentice (1974), The Last Labyrinth (1981), The City and the River* (1990) and a collection of short stories, *The Survivor* (1975).

There are a number of literary and non-literary influences which have their profound impact on Arun Joshi's creative sensibility. The most dominant among them are the Western existentialist philosophers, Hindu scriptures--*Bhagvad Gita, Upanishads, Vedanta* and Mahatma Gandhi. He has been influenced by Albert Camus and other existential writers. Like the works of modem existential thinkers, Joshi's novels express the absurdity of man's existence in modern world. Existential despair is one of the major thematic concerns of Arun Joshi that finds in his novels. Existentialism is a philosophical movement of the twentieth century dealing with man's disillusionment and despair

in the modem world. It is originated in philosophical and literary writings of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, Kafka and Beckett. M. H. Abrams (1985:86) defines it as . . . a tendency to view each man as an isolated being who is cast ignominiously into an alien universe, to conceive universe as possessing no inherent human truth, value or meaning and to represent man's life, as it moves from the nothingness which is both anguished and absurd.

Joshi's existential concern is essentially Hindu and the deep influence of the Hindu scriptures- *Bhagvad Gita, Vedanta and Upanishads* on Joshi's psyche. In Indian English novels, however, the effect of modem existentialism became clear only in the works of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi. The Indian English novelist before 1950s "deals with the external climate and not the climate of mind. (Kumar 2003:05). Arun Joshi noticed the collapse of the age old values resulting in the disjoined, purposeless and absurd universe, and, moreover, he saw the contemporary man in his constant search for a way that would help him to face the existential problem in this universe. All of his protagonists have been shown restlessly searching for their roots and knowing the purpose of their existence on this planet. His novels "from *The Foreigner* onwards to *The City and the River* have in them undercurrents of the existential philosophy" (Ibid: 42).

No doubt, the theme of Existentialism pervades in all the novels of Arun Joshi but my concern in this paper focus will be with the theme of existentialism in *The Foreigner*. The novel, "distinctly inspired by Albert Camus' *The Outsider*" (Iyenger 1973 :512), depicts existential despair of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi and "explores the individual's anguished consciousness of being alienated from the existing convention and ritual of the society" (Singh 1999: 131). It examines the problem of alienation and man's existential quest to find a meaning in the absurdity of life. In it, Sindi is depicted as "irritated and also embarrassed to find himself in the existential position of an outsider" (Ibid.).Sindi Oberoi was born in Kenya of an English mother and Indian father. Though his father was an Indian, he could hardly call himself a Hindu. He says, "Anyway I can't really be called a Hindu. My mother was English and my father, I am told a sceptic. That doesn't seem like a good beginning for a Hindu, does it!" (30). He simply remembers that his parents died in an air crash while he was a child. Their only legacy for

him is "a couple of wrinkled and cracked photographs" (12). Sindi remains a foreigner whether he is in London, in Boston or in Delhi. He could not think about himself belonging to any country in particular and wonders, ". . . did I belong to the world?" (55) But the sense of foreignness that afflicts him and makes him alienated from others is not geographical, as it might appear on surface, but that of his soul" (Srivastava 1982). He says; somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose, unless you could call the search for peace a purpose. Perhaps I felt like that, because I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India other place for that matter! It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner (55).

The above citation is significant enough to suggest an obvious case of rootlessness. Sindi' s life is "a study of rootlessness" (Kumar 2003:63). Denial of parental love and cultural roots, he grows into a wayward and finally becomes a wonderer "more like an alien" (22) to his culture. With the death of his uncle, he lost "a feeling of having an anchor" (55). Before that he never considered himself as rootless and foreigner: "My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went. I hadn't felt like that when my uncle was living" (ibid: 46)). The foreignness of Sindi is not something external but something, which he feels within. After the death of his parents, his security is damaged. "Now I suppose I existed only for dying" (56). He has no sense of security as he is isolated from his own people and society. "He was not only a foreigner to the cultures between which he shuttled but also to his emotional roots" (Bhatnagar 1983 :250). He is wandering aimlessly on the surface of life without an anchor. "Though Sindi had never to suffer the pangs of poverty, he felt starved of parental love and on many occasions was compelled to think of the absurdity of his existence" (Kumar 2003:63).

Right from his life in Kenya, London and Boston, he undergoes various changes and personal experiences. While in Kenya, once he thinks for suicide and when he comes to London, the same dryness remains with him. A girl like Anna seeks to find out her lost youth and lives for him but in response, he gives her nothing and shows his liking for Kathy. At last Kathy abandons him. The load of broken relationship disturbs him within. "The transitory pleasures of life fail to satisfy him for they do not help him in

finding the purpose of his life." (Raizada 1986:79). Hence, in America, he seems to be "afraid of getting involved" (53) with June Byth, an American girl. Because he thinks, "Life has no hopes for him in the future and he feels that it will be as bleak as the past" (Rengachari 1999b: 141).

In his first meeting with June, in the ball of International Students Association, she asks him "where are you from?" He thinks it "just about spoiled everything" (ibid.) and wished "she hadn't asked that question" (22.). Her asking so makes him rootless because he is aware of his rootlessness. His parentage and early life "made him the nowhere man" (Swain 1999c: 115). Here he cultivates a sense of detachment to overcome his painful past. He thinks so "Being a product of hybrid culture" (Kumar 2003:63). He is aware of his rootlessness. He wants to love her but afraid of involvement and marriage. "I was afraid of possessing anybody and I was afraid of being possessed, and marriage meant both" (91). To him, marriage is no answer for his problems. Like an existentialist, he says: I am happy you look at the world that way, June. America has given that to you. The statue of liberty promises you this optimism. But in my world there are no statues of liberty. In my world many things are inevitable and what's more of them are sad and painful. I can't come to your world. I have no escapes, June. I just have no escape" (107-108).

The mystery of human existence terrifies him when he comes to know about the death of June due to abortion. Babu' s death taught him only half the lesson but he learns remaining half lesson when he comes to know the death of June. Then "he looks upon the world as a heap of crumbled illusions where nothing is real and permanent" (Ghosh 1996:43). The nausea Sindi feels in his early days, keeps him restless throughout the life. He "sees no purpose in life and he finds himself living without a purpose" (Pandey 2000a:33). This sickness remains with him even after he joins London University. Though, there is nothing like that about the courses and he does well in the examinations, but he get fired and bored of the classroom lectures which according to him lack things about life. He seems to be sad and unhappy because his education does not teach him "how to live" (132). He comes to know about "the futility of human existence of his life at the bare age of 25 when normally a young man is full of enthusiasm and zest of life" (Vasta and Gaur 2001:34-35).

In the case of June, Sindi wants to love her without attachment. His "views on love and marriage are also strange" (Raizada 1986:81). He admits: "Even if I loved her and she loved me it would mean nothing, nothing that one could depend upon. I was not the kind of man one could love;" (34) He keeps detached approaches regarding his love with June, because he is deprived of social roots. He Says "I had no social life to speak of. I had only one life and it could be called by whatever one wished" (92). Sindi resembles T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" and "J. Alfred Prufrock". Like T. S. Eliot's straw men, he ekes out an existence which is no better than death in life. Like Prufrock's measuring his life with "coffee spoon" (Eliot 1961: 13), Sindi, too contemplates: My fifth Christmas on these alien shores. And yet all shores are alien when you don't belong any where. Twenty-fifth Christmas on this planet, twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places. Twenty-five years gone in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievements; a ten stone body that had to be fed from the times of a day, twenty eight times a weak. This was the sum of a lifetime of striving (80).

Like Prufrock, he is unable to understand his own self and life. He too is lonely like him, all alone in the wild world. Sindi's decision to go to Delhi, after the death of June, by a flip of coin "Heads for Nigeria. I said the coin showed tails New Delhi" (37), shows the hollowness of his existence. Usha Pathania (1992:138) rightly observes: Sindi's decision to go to Delhi, and more specifically the way it is made by a flip of the coin reveals that how carefully choice and thoughtful planning, the hallmarks of the having mode of existence, have lost their charm for him. This is an unmistakable sign of his progression from the having to the being mode of existence in which an individual approaches a situation by preparing nothing in advance. However, in Delhi too, he does not find peace, happiness and meaning of life. Indeed, his journey is not over. Though, an Indian by birth, Sindi feels outsider in India. Sheila, Babu's sister tries to understand him but she too says: "You are still a foreigner, you don't belong here" (122). There is intense sadness in Sindi which those who came in contact with him - June in America, Sheila; Mr. Khemka in India can feel in the very presence of the man. This he explains to Mr.Khemka: You had a clear-cut system of morality, a cast system that laid down all you had to do. You had a God; you had roots in the soil you lived upon. Look at me. I have no roots. I have no system of morality. What does it mean to me

if you call me an immoral man? I have no reason to be one thing or another. You ask me why I am not ambitious; well, have no reason to be. Come to of it I don't even have a reason to live! (118).

Sindi is aware of the destructive influence of rapid industrialization on man. The mechanized modem civilization erases the inner-self of man. Affectation, hypocrisy and artificiality have come in the wake of industrialization in our society. The novelist highlights the contrast in the living standard of two classes of civilized society- Mr. Khemka, the employer and Muthu, the employee. Sindi is awestruck on his first visit to Mr. Khemka's mansion: "I looked . . . at the richness of Mr. Khemka's drawing room. This was no doubt India's affluent society. Plush carpets, low streamlined divans, invisible lighting, bell buttons in every corner and sculpture" (12).In contrast to the mansions of wealthy people are the slums of the poor section of the society: The slums across the street, bundles of soggy humanity shuttled out of their huts and spread their miserable rags to dry. Full-breasted women, their thighs naked under wet saris, scurried back and forth like animals quarrelling cover small bits of ties. Naked children rolled in the filthy pools, squealing with delight (40).The mode of life and the set of values which Khemka and his friends follow make Sindi sick. Sindi though labeled as an Indian, is an outsider, a stranger, a foreigner in India too. He is filled with disgust to know how Mr. Khemka and his tribe exploited needy people like Jain and Muthu so that their empire could grow and expand. In spite of Sindi's most intimate and intense moments of passion with various girls in England, he cannot get entangled with anyone of them in marriage as he comes to the conclusion that "Marriage was more often a lust for possession than anything else. People get married just as they bought new cares" (67). "Sindi's [this] intransigence stems from his fear of committing himself as also that of being crushed by the value system of American civilization based on materialism and individualism" (Naikar 2003: 1 07). Sindi is threatened with the fear of the loss of his identity, by his contact with other. Sindi appears to be a typical Eliotean character. He is like the self-isolated Eliotean characters as Prufrock and Gerontion. Like a Wastelander, he remains neutral or indifferent to almost everything. D. H. Lawrence's Paul Morel is also the same case. In his *Sons and Lovers*, Paul seeks to confirm his identity through his relationship with Miriam. He tries to maintain a safe distance between them. When Miriam turns out to be

possessive, Paul feels his self is threatened. "I can only give you friendship - it's all I am capable of' (Lawrence 1948:271). But the false detachment of Sindi drives both June and Babu to death. Witnessing the terrible consequence of detachment, Sindi decides to leave America and go to India. Sindi finds America "a place for well- fed automations rushing about in automatic cars" (78) and much "too clean and optimistic and empty" (Ibid). Arun Joshi presents the hectic and mechanized life of America. Sindi notices the hypocrisy, artificiality and hollowness of the modern society in America. Participants at the ball arranged by the International Students Association pretend to be courteous. Even the strangers at the time of parting promise to meet 96 again, knowing fully well that it would not be possible: "Strangers partied on the doorsteps promising to meet again, knowing fully well they didn't mean it. It was the American way" (23). In the words of Siddhartha Sharma (Sharma 2003: 150) "Arun Joshi's Boston is Eliot's Boston of *The Waste Land* - insipid, sterile, degenerate, with no hope of resurrection." Experiencing futility and bitter hollowness of American civilized society, Sindi by just a flip of coin leaves America and comes to India in search of a new life. But his hopes of 'a new life' are shattered. He finds India no better than America. He finds parties to be a bit of hoax with people drinking acting and talking of money - doing nothing worthwhile. In India he comes across different types of people with various vanities. Sindi discovers both the civilizations to be destructive and tyrannical. The material prosperity and individualism rampant in both the civilizations make Sindi unhappy and fail to provide him a state of peace within and calm around. In India, Sindi comes to realize: "In truth it had only been a change of theatre from America. The Show had remained unchanged" (174). The people of India are like Americans in "squeezing happiness out of the mad world" (Ibid) though; they have a different way of doing it. At first, Sindi feels himself a misfit in the ultra-modem society of Boston. But in Indian society, his foreign background makes him a misfit. Sheila rightly remarks: "You are still a foreigner. You don't belong here" (122). The rapid growth of affluent society, the poverty and hunger of the masses, the deterioration of moral values, and the tension between ensuing generations resulting from changing ethos make increasing and often disturbing demands on the individuals and lead to their predicament. Arun Joshi has tried to project, through Sindi, the dehumanizing impact of technology and

highly industrialized modern civilization on individuals. Sindi is having a quest "to know the meaning of life" (142). He goes on hopping from country to country because he finds his life futile, hollow, meaningless and purposeless. He realizes the futility of human achievements and purposelessness of his life at the bare age of twenty-five when normally a young man is full of enthusiasm, energy and zest for life. He gives expression to his feelings thus: And yet all shores are alien when you don't belong any where. Twenty fifth Christmas on this planet, twenty five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places. Twenty five years gone in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievements; a ten stone body that had to be fed from the times of a day, twenty eight times a weak. This was the sum of a lifetime of striving (80). Ursula in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* ponders similarly: "A life of barren routine without inner meaning, without any real significance . . . One could not bear any more of this shame of sordid routine and mechanical nullity . . . And all life was a rotary motion mechanized, cut off from reality" (Lawrence 1950: 219). Like Ursulla, Sindi too, suffers from the horror of civilized society. Since he considers his life to be full of illusions, he is unable to find his roots anywhere in the world. He ruminates: ". . . I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference it would have made if I have lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter?" (55). Mr. Khemka's tyranny and the way he exploits the needy people like Jain and Muthu, fill Sindi's heart with disgust. When the income-tax people raid Khemka's office and take away all the important documents including fake account books, Sindi comes to know the reality and horror of civilized society. Thus, Arun Joshi, in this novel delineates Sindi's predicament, particularly the feeling of futility and meaninglessness of his life that have come as a result of hollowness of civilized society.

Thus, Arun Joshi has tried to project through experiential world of his protagonist the terrifying and dehumanizing impact of urbanized and highly industrialized modem civilization on the individuals. He seems to say that modem civilization is by and large materialistic, hedonistic and economically speaking money and profit oriented. The present day unrest is due mainly to our laying too much emphasis on matter and material comforts to the complete neglect of moral progress. The blind use of machines and technological

development has destroyed our value system.

The interpretation of Joshi's novel from his existential point of view, leads us to settle some of the obvious questions involved therein. Joshi is not merely imitating Camus, Sartre or Kafka by exploiting their techniques at his own expense; rather, he is recreating the theme of existentialism against Indian milieu, ethos and culture to give the existential predicament a universal dimension.

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Book Review

Dr. Assa Singh Ghuman : *Khushwant Singh's Novels*.
Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd. Chandigarh, 2012. pp 215.
Rs. 395/ .

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Many critical books and articles have been published on the novels, short stories and other writings of Khushwant Singh, a well-known Indian English writer, analyzing his work from multiple perspectives. The writer of *Train to Pakistan* fame has to his credit the vastness of experience of different cultures and countries, an incisive study of human psychology, an exposure to a great variety of human nature, and a perceptive knowledge of the histories of the world especially of India. He has also been a witness to many gruesome events which India has passed through during the colonial and post-Independence phase because of the power politics at various levels. A writer who is a queer mixture of unfathomable scholarship, unflinching boldness and frankness, having a sharp eye on minute details, a reveler in bawdiness, but at the same time sensitive to the degradation of ethical and human values in all walks of life, has dealt with almost all the aspects of human life in his works.

In his book *Khushwant Singh's Novels*, Dr. Assa Singh Ghuman has made an analysis of the four novels of Khushwant Singh *Train to Pakistan* (1956*), I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), *Delhi:A Novel* (1989), *Burial at Sea* (2004)- from Foucauldian perspective and has also shown in them " the interplay of fiction and history." The critic has given an exhaustive review of the criticism available on Khushwant Singh's fiction highlighting various thematic, stylistic and historical aspects of his fiction and has convincingly built the argument for choosing to study and critique Singh's four novels in the light of Michel Foucault's views on "power relations," "political structures, systems of rules and norms, techniques and apparatuses of government, dividing practices and strategic relations between subjects who act upon each other." The first two chapters of the book introduce the man and the writer Khushwant Singh in detail, his

major concerns as a writer, the historical contexts of his four fictional writings, the recent trends in criticism about history and historical fiction, a brief, coherent and incisive account of Foucault's views from his different works which the critic claims certainly help us analyse and understand Khushwant Singh's concerns, messages and vision from new perspectives not explored so far. The next four chapters of the book foreground with appropriate arguments and quotes from Foucault's works the divisive strategies of religious fundamentalism used by people in power to divide and eliminate people and rule throughout the course of history. The critic has also highlighted Singh's belief like that of Foucault in the ennobling impact of religion in character formation and inculcating ethical values as portrayed through the character of Jugga in *Train to Pakistan* and Sabhrai in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*. But how religion is being used as disgusting mask by so called religious celebrities for derogatory ends has been aptly shown in the novel *Burial at Sea*. The critic has rightly critiqued Khushwant Singh for his pornographic descriptions of male and female bodies and sexual indulgences which have invited harsh remarks from many critics both from India and abroad, but at the same time Singh's interplay with fiction and history in the portrayal of historical personalities has been appreciated by the critic.

The lucid and scholarly analysis of Khushwant Singh's four novels using Foucault's ideology and insights is definitely a great contribution to the already available criticism on Singh's novels. The critic should have added a brief and comprehensive conclusion in the book summing up the thesis built and developed throughout.

Book Review

Perry Anderson. *The Indian Ideology.* Three Essays Collective (Gurgaon), 2012, Pages vi+184, Rs. 350

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The celebrated New Left historian and political essayist Perry Anderson's latest book *The Indian Ideology* (2012) appears at a time when several mainstream publications are proclaiming India's arrival on the stage of world history. Many of these are truncated histories of the so-called arrival which, interestingly, do not go back beyond the 1990s. The self-defined limits are convenient as they sustain faith in the Indian 'miracle'. Anderson, however, digs farther back, beginning with the country's anti-colonial struggle under Gandhi's leadership. His objective is to force into light the historical unconscious of the Indian polity. In the process, he offers quite a few rational, historical explanations of several 'miracles', including those of India's unity as a country and its stability as a democracy. Anderson's narrative is gripping, suitably spiced here and there, and supported by adequate notes and references that any serious work of history needs. He hammers away delicately but firmly at the gods of modern Indian historiography to undermine the "pieties" (5) that have kept truth a prisoner of darkness for too long now.

Invoking Marx and Engels's *German Ideology*, Anderson's book sets out to test the 'idea of India' against the reality. That 'idea', comprising primarily the triune of democracy, secularity and unity, constitutes, according to him, the ideology of the Indian republic. Significantly, the historian in Anderson departs from his acknowledged 'German' intellectual predecessors in more clearly articulating ideology as grounded in history in "the conditions and events that generated them" (2). Yet that does not mean he would deny the crucial agency of political leadership. On the contrary, he sometimes appears, to me at least, to be conceding too much power among ideology, event and agency to personal agency as the producer and director of history.

The book is based on three essays published in the summer of

2012 in the *London Review of Books* and is part of Anderson's forthcoming work on the inter-state system of US, China, Russia, India and Brazil. The case of India, he says, required greater treatment of historical background; hence this book.

Anderson comes out as a fiercely polemical historian who nevertheless does not go overboard in bolstering his thesis. His central argument is that the Indian state continues to bask in the memorial glow of the anti-colonial struggle, and this clouds its vision of the reality which is at serious odds with its ideology. In his opinion, neither democracy, nor secularity, nor indeed unity can be said to have been accomplished as projects. While there is a fair degree of tolerance of criticism of the country's track record as a democracy, the tolerance decreases when it comes to secularity, and disappears altogether when it comes to unity.

As a continuation of the nationalist movement, the Indian democracy excludes, practically, vast sections of the people. Indeed, both the Partition and the Constitution were imposed from above, Anderson remarks. Historically, he says, the Congress has been "controlled by a coalition of rich farmers, traders and urban professionals" (110). If the resulting exclusion of such large numbers of people has not translated into electoral retribution, the reasons lie in the linguistic diversity of India and in the entrenched divisive system of caste. The role of caste in the country's political system has of course changed over the years since independence, yet "[w]hat would not change [is] its structural significance as the ultimate secret of Indian democracy" (112). Catching that significance in a flash of insight, Anderson recalls Ambedkar's "inaugural error" which inhered in his perception of "a contradiction between society and polity" according to which the "imperfections" in the polity are the "effects of distortion" in the society. In a formulation that will probably go down as one of his most incisive, he goes on to say:

> But the relationship between the two has always been more paradoxical than this. A rigid social hierarchy was the basis of original democratic stability, and its mutation into a compartmentalized identity politics has simultaneously deepened parliamentary democracy and debauched it (171).

He likewise questions the Indian state for the self-congratulatory noises it makes over secularism: "Indian secularism is Hindu confessionalism by another name" (142). He acknowledges, though, that the state is more secular than the society (145). Going back, he squarely holds Gandhi's infusion of a Hindu imaginary into the nationalist discourse as the founding moment of the Indian state's persistent ambivalence over secularism. In fact, the roots of the Partition which took place on religious lines can be traced to the Non-Cooperation Movement which transformed the Congress from an elite organization into a mass organization. But would the course of things have been any different if Gandhi had not emerged on the scene? Probably not, he says. Religion had already entered the nationalist discourse, as in Maharashtra and elsewhere. However, there was a chance that the situation would change once leadership passed on to Nehru who had strong socialist and rationalist leanings. But Nehru, Anderson rues, not only chose to succumb to Gandhi's whimsical reliance on popular religious discourse but himself flirted with Hinduism in pursuit of his ambitious vision of a centralized political authority after independence. Yet this might have been unavoidable, Anderson seems to suggest, given the reality of India's political culture. Hence, his semi-exonerating verdict on the Congress: "Structurally, the secularism of Congress had been a matter not of hypocrisy, but of bad faith, which is not the same…" (139).

Turning to the fond myth that India's preservation of its unity is a rare feat, he emphatically points out that most of the former European colonies have since retained their borders. While 'threat to the unity and integrity of India' remains a favourite slogan of political parties during elections and while no one wants including the leading intellectuals to probe the reality of India's 'unity', Anderson remarks that the extremely heavy presence of the security forces in Kashmir and the north east indicates a precarious unity, achieved and maintained with great difficulty.

His prescription is that if India is to forge ahead, it must come to terms with the ghosts of its past. It must candidly re-examine its founding ideology and test it against the touchstone of reality. For instance, India can resolve its disputes with China and Pakistan only if it embraces political realism, something that the leadership learnt from Nehru to shun.

While Anderson is quite hard on Gandhi and Nehru for part of

their political legacy, he generously admires them for other reasons. The former's organizational abilities and iron will and the latter's commitment to democracy particularly earn his praise, although Nehru's gift of his dynasty has been as bad a curse as the skewed voting system of the first-past-the-post bequeathed by the Raj. Anderson has particularly high regard for Subhas Chandra Bose's secularism and B. R. Ambedkar's intellectual acumen.

The well-paced historical narrative would have been richer and weightier if Anderson had treated of the Indian Left's fate and role as well, which he has chosen to keep out except for some passing observations. One of these is: ". . . the marginalization of the Left has been a structural effect of the dominance of the hegemonic religion in the national identity" (148). But that does not explain the Left's relative decline in India over the years, nor does it tell us why the Left of all the political stakeholders should possess effectively no agency to shape history. This sounds awkward in a work that seems to grant, as I said above, an excess of agency to even some individuals, such as Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah and Mountbatten.

There are places, particularly in the third chapter/essay, where Anderson relies on one or two sources, giving the impression of having selected the sources to suit the narrative. Even if these are essays, these are nevertheless essays on history, not some "loose sallies of the mind," as Samuel Johnson conceived the essay to be. Although Anderson does not often attenuate the historian's rigour for the powers of polemical rhetoric, yet he sometimes does resign to the temptation. It irks more than it thrills.

Book Review

L. M. Sharma Pearls and Pebbles. *Books Plus, Saket, New Delhi, ISBN : 81-87403-28-4 pp 78 PB Ed.2010. Rs.200.*

Prof. R. K. Bhushan Sabharwal
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This is an elegantly printed book of English poetry and this is a valuable and vibrant addition to the envious treasures of Indian Poetry in English. I may acquaint the reader with the rich and abundant inheritance of the poet, L. M. Sharma rooted deep in scholarship, teaching and critical sensibility and zestful living. This has incessantly contributed to his intellectual potentialities and stature. The poems included in this book of poetry are claimed to be the selections from his twenty year poetic adventures-why he has chosen to retain the rest in his secret bowers is known only to him. However, these selected unnumbered poems emerge out from the complex thoughts, deep well-controlled emotions woven with effortless ease into the sonorous harmonies with rarest pauses and punctuations- only four signs of interrogations, two full-stops and one sign of exclamation hyphenated there and there only. This seems to become another forte of these poetic compositions but it is pointer to the futurity of this process, unstoppable! These are mature reflections on life as lived by the poet and its vagaries as experienced by him in the sweet and sour of relations and situations. So there is nothing surprising that these lovely pieces of musical resonance, occasionally brass-band resonance, are a million pearls with million VIBGYOR rays adoring the eternal majestic silence and annoyance of the pebbles listening to the music of the fast-flowing deep and shallow waters wherein has been churning the poetic process of L.M. Sharma.

The poet says in *A Later- Day Word*- "As I look back on these poems, a few almost look like strangers while there are some that make me sad, happy in sadness or in smiles of recognition. I run into lust and rage which will engage me and challenge my courage, my vague ideas of love and dignity. There I seem to run into the danger of laying claim to too many things." The book begins with the title poem and ends with *A Surreal Affair;* these poems are unnumbered but not the pages. These poems have "glowing images of unsullied love" for which the poet expresses

strong yearnings concealed in the subtle word associations which create a unique meaning lent by his own poetic idiom; and the poet has vague idea of love and dignity. The contradictions have been resolved by him successfully, perhaps not as poet. Allusions to Indian mythology and English literature, the feeling of nausea, memory, desire, "vision of passion-charged brain"- this work-a-day world "crammed with dream fantasy" and "crumbs of ideals" "held with a rare fondness"- all are the enchantments of "the magic casements" though they do not open on "the perilous seas" but in the salubrious surroundings of the ***Dev Bhumi,*** form the citadels of the poet's life. His art of capturing the picturesque image-formations from the eternal cyclical changes in seasons sensitively felt and seen in relation to the daily movement of life, are the touchstone of romance lavishly used.

In most of these poems, there is an irresistible strain of romance wherein the personal becomes the universal and the universal becomes the personal. That is why even a casual reading of these poems transport us to the best of the Romantics and the Pre-Raphaelites in the British Poetry, though the satire and sarcasm of modern poetry make their stray presence felt. Sensual and sensuous images spellbind us as these are teasing the "rum-roused mind" of Sharma. "Elegance regal", "the magnetic empress touch", "transparent gestures"-

"Beauty for which man can well
Mortgage his all" and

"radiance hung in the air" leading to "a labyrinth of yearning" for the Aphrodite and the aphrodisiac there is a lot more in the wealth of romance, at times, with deliberate twists to the fugitive passion. But how far and how long? The "wings of poesy" here are not "viewless", and the flight of the bird is well-within sight and reach and so is the world of flight, though unvisited at places, characteristically marked by realism and impressionism with conscious stray touches of Eliot-brands. These poems have a tempting grace of beauty rarely found in the post-colonial Indian poetry in English.

Philosophical retreats from sensuality, yearning, yearning for fulfillment of the aphrodisiac on the sunny road of romance shaded and darkened by the floating clouds awaken us to the cosmic culture of man, although the poet stumbles upon the paths of daily relationships from

childhood to adolescence to youth and age haunted by memory and desire without any sense of languishing. The last poem assimilates and absorbs all the past in the technology-impacted and infected present. Last but not least, the poet's "Living Passion" is the fast-flowing current on the deep tranquil waters branching off into the reinterpretation of his 'Autograph', 'Prayer', 'King Lear', 'The Smile of Buddha', 'A Collage', 'The Art of Churning', 'I Am The Dead Horatio'……..and the passion pauses nowhere to move further and delve deep into the chaos of modernity.

After reading these poetic delights and ecstasies, we look forward to those held up, may be judiciously by L.M. Sharma, from his twenty year poetic ventures.

Book Review

Supriya Bhandari. *Symphonies of Silence*, Unistar Publishers, Chandigarh. Rs. 150, Pages 96.

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Sidhwan Khurd (Ludhiana)

Symphonies of Silence is Supriya Bhandari's second anthology of poems wherein she portrays a coherent picture of the life of women who constantly labour under the patriarchal constraints and yearn for meaningful space to feel, breathe freely and realize their intrinsic potential. Without being jingoistic about the yearnings of the human in a woman, Bhandari evocatively and sensitively delineates the trials, tribulations and ordeals of the contemporary woman who is torn between the pulls of tradition and modernity. The first poem in the *Symphonies of Silence*, "Krishna," pays a tribute to love and life and stresses the need to possess and cherish love in life with the symbol of Krishna, the love god. Her poem "Words" shows the potent power of language in our lives. With beautiful symbols and metaphors, the poem seeks to show through words the influence of words. Some of her poems delve into the realm of the supernatural and charm and tease the reader into believing in the metaphorical world of the spirit where souls whisper to her and fret and tremble to her in the night. Her views sometimes expand our interpretation, make us more at home in the world, and force us to look a little more solemnly at the enormous and terrifying vacuum toward which we are headed.

It is said that poetry gives us tools for living. A poem like "Have You Ever…" does exactly that, jolting us out of smugness and pushing into a consciousness that will work for us. The poem recognises the distinctiveness that we work so hard to discount, and yet, inconsistently, it makes us a little less lonely by promising us that we are not alone in our solitude. Through her dexterous use of images and similes, Supriya Bhandari opens a woman's heart to reveal emotions that the woman herself cannot express. We understand a woman better through her poems, and we understand ourselves and our own treasured ones a little better for it. The poetess gives consistency to the flat world. If there's any

truth to the truism that poetry reminds us to stop and look at the world, her poetry prompts us to celebrate the sounds and sights that remain in our reminiscence. It is the recollected sights and sounds we feel most movingly. Her poems exhibit a skill that is all the more striking for the way it never diverts us from the prospect but, rather, adds a breadth of melody and an extraordinary touch.

Bhandari crafts a world for readers where the foundations of everyday existence are exalted. Through these poems, the reader is bidden to scrutinize specifics of all things: nature, family, and the everyday come together as the basics of experience. Hers is a fresh voice in contemporary poetry that arouses gendered femininity in a restrained manner and rejoices in the expertise. Many of the poems in this collection also amplify the captivating and sometimes confusing artistry in our natural ambience. She redirects these interpretations of nature back into the woman's own identity, displaying how these natural manifestations shape her life.

With meticulousness and precision to record the pulsations of a woman's heart and make a graph of the symphonies of silence, Supriya Bhandari makes the reader privy to the basics of experience of a gendered individuality that is at once passionately candid and constructed. What is perhaps most marvellous about this collection is its range. The poems presented here deal with issues ranging from experiences with death, the sublime, encounters with love and divine and the earthly. Hers is refreshingly sane voice in contemporary poetry that is not afraid to speak out her singular experiences with the world. *Symphonies of Silence* allows readers to witness the innermost process of conception and the creation of an identity engraved by the everyday experiences. Her poems are opulent in detail, authentic in emotion, and vibrant at heart, and surely bode well for the contemporary Indian English poetry.

Poetry Column

Loss and Gain

Pashupati Jha

You did what you desired
for your bulge and body
a complete animal with
gripping tongue and teeth
none could escape ever
your vicious tentacles
you squeezed the last ounce
of flesh, blood, and bones
from your hapless victims
each lewd laughter of yours
left many groans behind.

But at the end of it all
you were all alone
bereft of family and friends,
you died a complete death
obliterated from the memory of time
worse than that of dinosaurs;
not even the latest computer
would retrieve now
your name lost forever.

Poetry Column

A Letter Unmailed

Ramanjot Singh Anand

"This is not a story but an experience I have lived,
My recollection of events from that 'day' is very vivid"

This is a letter which does not have any address. That is why I called it "A Letter Unmailed". This is a letter from a son to his mother who died more than a decade ago. The cause of the death was "Breast Cancer." The teenaged son she left behind is a man now, recalling bits and pieces of the events which took place on that cursed day. The son in the letter is me and I am writing to my mother what I was/am going through.

Summer of '97, a curse called 'Cancer' visited us,
It was too late for us before we could even guess.

Was month of June, when we lost you,
Things have never been same after you.

Time just flew; sometimes it seems to be so untrue,
It's been 13 years since we bid you adieu.

The Void you left is still there,
Every passing day, I miss your love and care.

Mama, why did you go away?
I swear, I miss you today and every day.

Years rolled by, your memories are still with us,
Your absence is felt on every occasion auspicious.

Vacuum that I have, I rarely share,
Every 25th of June sadness is in the air.

I remember the wee hours of that day, your last night per se,
Everyone except 'us' knew this was the day.

As I entered the room, Papa was sitting beside you,
He was living those moments which shouldn't have been true.

To this date, I am haunted by the stillness of the faces in that room,
They were crestfallen, mourning and shrouded by a pall of gloom.

There you lay still on your bed with all the peace and composure,
Your 'faith' was the reason that made you endure.

As I walked in the room, your were breathing very slow,
Sadly, but yes, it was time to go.

In no time your breathing became more deep,
As if you were getting ready for an eternal sleep.

Then you took the last half- breath,
And that was the beginning of a never ending Sabbath.

Papa had put his hand on your mouth,
He accepted, but I didn't which was now the truth.

Your face was now under white linen,
Scared and confused in a corner, were your children.

Sun rose that day, to our dismay,
Only to see HIS worst screenplay.

By afternoon, you were madeup like a bride,
Just before leaving for your ultimate ride.

In a wooden box, you were taken away,
I wish no child should ever see this day.

You were put on the pyre for your last rites,
I kissed your forehead, before it ignites.

There you went before my eyes,
I was crying, and in my mind I had so many WHYs

13 years down the line, a lot many things I want to tell,
Things were really difficult when we bid you farewell

Papa has been playing both roles well,
Been like a force always trying to propel.

I owe my life to both of you,
I wish I can have, in every life, parents like you.

The fortune of your memories is always there,
A few recollections from it I will definitely share.

Still remember the days when you used to comb my hair,
The different identity I have, you made me aware.

Making my *Joora* you recited Guru Nanak's song,
Learnt *Panj Pauris* from you, singing along.

Meanwhile your *Waddhu* got married, and has a son now,
That “little imp” has added in our life, one big wow.

We didn't miss *Jot* in his name,
The same given to us by you, we always proclaim.

Bhabhi is the only female in the home right now,
She has been goading me to get her company somehow.

Shy and foolish I am, that is the real me,
I am still your *Chhotu*, and I'll always be.
~Rj~
Visit my blog: http://quixoticquest.wordpress.com

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