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dialog

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURAL STUDIES
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CONTENTS

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DIALOG provides a forum for interdisciplinary research on diverse aspects of culture, society and literature. For its forthcoming issues it invites scholarly papers, research articles and book reviews. The research papers (about 8000 words) devoted to the following areas would merit our attention most:

- Popular Culture
- Indian Writings in English and Translation
- Representations of Gender, Caste and Race
- Cinema as Text
- Theories of Culture
- Emerging Forms of Literature

Published twice a year, the next two issues of **Dialog** would carry miscellaneous papers. on the above areas. The contributors are requested to send their papers latest by November, 2012. The papers could be sent electronically at akshayakumarg@gmail.com or directly to The Editor, **Dialog,** Department of English and Cultural Studies, Chandigarh -160014. A CD of the papers in MS Word format must be sent along with the two hard copies.

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EDITOR : AKSHAYA KUMAR

Editor's Note

When about three years ago, we rechristened our Department as Department of English and Cultural Studies, not many were sure about the precise road map that we would traverse. Despite hiccups and roadblocks, we made our beginnings. We introduced two optional papers in M.A. II exclusively devoted to the domain of Cultural Studies. In these two papers, the endeavour was to cover the theoretical debates pertaining to culture, ideology and politics. Of course at M.Phil. level we had already designed courses on film studies, translation and feminism. In order to enhance our profile and also to lend legitimacy to our claim, we applied for UGC, Special Assistance Programme (SAP). The project was entitled "Cultural Studies in the Indian Context". Due to our collective endeavour, we have been granted SAP and some activities have already taken place under the programme. Very recently we organized a workshop and a national seminar on the theme of Cultural Studies in the Indian Context. As we get more funds, and more infrastructure and equipment, we are sure that our students and scholars would very soon reap the benefits of our new enterprise.

In the project-proposal, it was mentioned that the Department would float a journal exclusively devoted to Cultural Studies. Of the two issues that we bring out of *Dialog*, we have decided to limit this issue to the papers that deal with the issues of culture. In a way, the present issue is a special one; it could be taken as an inaugural issue of Cultural Studies, published by the Department. The papers included in this issue deal with films, virtual media, music, sports, religion, caste, etc. We shall take time to further narrow down the theme-areas. May be next year, we could think of bringing out a special issue on Film and Visual Culture. Similarly we plan an issue on the poetics and culture of entertainment and pleasure in India. The contributors to this issue include senior professors and young research scholars. In fact, it is a matter of satisfaction that our research scholars have responded rather too positively to the idea of Cultural Studies and most of them are now exploring areas like photography, cartoons and advertisements to interrogate the nuances of representation.

It needs to be specially mentioned here that this time too, we received an overwhelming response to our call for papers. For the present issue we received many papers and due to paucity of space we are not able to accommodate them. Some of the papers which received a ready approval of the reviewers would be published in the next issue, and we are sure that our contributors would bear with us this slight delay in the publication of their papers. In the region, *Dialog* has emerged as one consistent literary journal; it is consistent in terms of its quality and also in terms of its regular publication. Let it be made very clear that only those papers which are reviewed positively find their way in this journal. We look forward to serious academic contributions.

Akshaya Kumar

Popular Culture and Literary Studies : A Few Tentative Reflections

—Rana Nayar

Before I start talking about the relationship between Popular Culture and Literary Studies, let me offer a few general observations on what I understand by the term 'Popular Culture.' There is no denying the fact that Popular Culture is certainly a contested category and so deserves to be examined very closely. If one were to look into the definition of the term, one would certainly be confounded not only by the sheer range, variety and versatility of its meanings but also their self-contradictory, self-annihilating postures and possibilities. To give you an example, some people may think of Popular Culture as something of a people's culture (which is a very broad way of defining the term. Besides, 'people' is too generalized and amorphous a term to be used here) while others may associate it with a certain class of people, say, the working class, or the rural people or the urban masses or sometimes, even a confused aggregate or conglomerate of urban and rural consumers. Going further, one may talk of Popular Culture as a Post-Industrial (or Post-technology) Culture (whose beginnings coincided with the proliferation of the technology, viz., the printing press, photography, cinema, television and now Internet) whereas some others may continue to see it as re-articulation of essentially agrarian feudal/ folk cultural forms (original or pastiche) in the contemporary world.

Popular culture has been defined as everything from "common culture" to "folk culture," from "people's culture" to "mass culture." While it has been all of these things at various points in history, Post-War America undeniably associated popular culture with commercial culture and all its trappings: movies, television, radio, cyberspace, advertising, toys, nearly any commodity available for purchase; several forms of art, photography, games, and even group "experiences" like collective comet-watching or rave dancing on ecstasy. While humanities and social science departments before the 1950s would rarely have imagined including any of the above listed items in their curricula, 'popular culture' is now a well-established discipline, enmeshed in a complex set of institutional practices. Though "pop culture" is, today, one of the US' most lucrative export commodities, making everything from Levi's jeans to Sylvester Stallone movies popular on the international market, it should not be analyzed or studied exclusively from the perspective of the US material, economic and political culture.

Americanization, or if I may say so, MacDonaldization of 'popular culture' is of a fairly recent origin, going as far back as the early decades of 20th century, so it only tells half the story. Globalization of this phenomenon has resulted in the blurring of fault lines, masking the contradictions of its cultural history, erasing the specificities of its multiple variants in different cultural contexts.

In order to capture the plurality, multiplicity and differentiated variety of 'popular culture,' it is necessary to look into the specificities of its nature, function and even history in different cultural contexts. Much before we start looking into its history, let us first cast a glance at some of the definitions of 'popular culture.' One of the most incisive definitions of 'popular culture' has, indeed, been offered by Peter Burke, who says that it is "everyone's culture that could be consumed by both wide audiences and restricted ones." While reflecting on this description, let us also bear in mind that cultural strata have a history, something not always very easy to pin down. Besides, popular culture is a complex phenomenon, hard to define and difficult to analyze. What might seem 'popular' may really be 'elite' and what appears to be 'elite' may really be 'popular' and the relationships between the two undergo qualitative as well as quantitative changes over time. Interrogating Peter Burke's 'populist' definition of popular culture, Sue Wiseman gives it a definite 'elitist' twist and orientation. Her contention is that popular culture is all that is the "left over," 'the residual form' after we have decided what high culture essentially is all about. She looks upon popular culture as a reassembled collage of classical, biblical and contemporary texts that otherwise percolate throughout society, a matter of connecting and fusing different registers, narratives and styles of writing and thinking.

Now if we do wish to understand the dynamics of this antithetical relationship between the popular and the elite culture, or how and why 'popular' became the 'Other' of the elite culture, we shall have to return to history, which I don't want to do right now, purely for the tactical reasons. Any such attempt at this juncture may only result in an unnecessary digression, which I'd eminently like to avoid, though I shall ultimately return to this issue, a little later in this essay. At this point, all I would like to emphasize is that though the distinction between the 'high' and the 'low' cultures may have remained central to all theoretical discussions on 'modernism,' with the slow emergence and proliferation of 'postmodernism,' it certainly stands challenged, even invalidated. Postmodern approach to culture no longer recognizes the distinction between the 'high' and the 'low,' the 'elite' and the 'popular,'

the 'sacred' and the 'profane.' Even though the fault lines may have thus collapsed, this binary opposition, as John Storey points out in his book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,* has always been somewhat spurious, and therefore suspect in real historical sense. He says, regardless of whether we talk of the Shakespearean plays or the novels of Dickens, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* or its film version, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* or Mario Puzo's novel from which it drew inspiration, there is a very thin line of demarcation that marks the 'classical' off from the 'popular.'

To put it differently, 'popular culture' is a contestable category, not only because of the blurred fault lines but also due to the contradictions inherent in its nature and character. While some people look upon it in apolitical terms as an "authentic" culture of the people, others emphasize its radical and political potential by treating it as "a site of struggle and resistance between the subordinate and dominant groups within a society." While media critics like Marshall McLuhan and several others celebrate its arrival, academics like Hannah Arendt and Susan Sontag denounce it for its "dumbing down." Unlike those who applaud the media for its instant message and/or communication, there are others who bemoan the fact that "the newspapers that once ran foreign news now feature celebrity gossip or pictures of scantily dressed young ladies," that "television reality shows and asinine soaps," only reveal people's pre-occupation with 'trivia' or their immersion in celebrity culture. The problem with popular culture is that just when you think you have understood it; it starts facing in exactly the opposite direction, thus revealing its Janus-faced character. One of the major semantic, or should I say, theoretical worries about it is that it can't easily be pinned down or demarcated. Often, it is difficult to decide as to what should be included in and/or excluded from the purview of this eminently 'slippery' term.

If I'm pointing out the difficulties in either defining or perceiving popular culture as a conceptual category, it is simply to underline the fact that this term creates semantic problems of its own; some of which I propose to outline in my essay, as I go along. Having said that, let me also emphasize that the problem of semantic instability is not something peculiar to 'popular culture;' as much the same may be stated about several other 'modern' and/or 'post-modern' terms, including the umbrella terms viz., 'modern' and post-modern.' If definitions are problematic, do we have other modes of accessing, mediating or interrogating popular culture? This is where I draw strength from Michele Foucault, who has not only articulated alternative modes of historical

discourse but has also given us the apparatus for excavating 'archeology' of knowledge in general, and that of human sciences, in particular. Following his lead, I, too, would like to make an effort, howsoever audacious and unsatisfactory, at excavating the archeology of popular culture, that, to my mind, lies embedded within the discourse of literary studies itself. If we look carefully enough, we would discover that the notion of 'popular culture' has been present in the mainstream culture right from the beginning, sometimes in the emergent, sometimes residual and sometimes, in the dominant form.

In a manner of speaking, popular culture has been present in the discourse of literary studies right from the beginning, though the realization that it could also be recognized as a separate, discrete and independent discourse, with its own theoretical apparatus, has only emerged in the 20th century. Much before Herbert Marcuse, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Frederic Jameson and others had begun to theorize about 'popular culture,' it had existed within the mainstream culture of Western literary discourse itself. Poetry, especially when it was initially started, say by Homer (if we could treat him as an originator of poetry in the Western tradition), was essentially a popular form as it was orally sung and recited among the people whose aspirations, dreams, beliefs and ideas it sought to capture. In other words, poetry was a people's discourse, not a dominant one, at least, when it initially originated. A few centuries later, owing to a number of historical factors, which I don't wish to go into at this stage, drama replaced poetry as a popular discourse. The fact that at any given point of time, a single performance of a Greek play by Aeschylus or Sophocles was witnessed by no less than twenty thousand people, even more, does speak of its popularity among the masses.

With the onward march of history, and the slow emergence of different literary forms dependent upon a variegated living, material and cultural practices, the 'popular culture' slowly moved to the subterranean regions of the Western literary discourse. This is when a clear-cut notion of 'what was dominant' or 'what must be dominant' had begun to emerge within the social and political practices of the Western history. With the rise of Christian ideology and feudalism as its main ally, the notion of 'popular' almost became a 'pariah,' synonymous with everything that was 'vulgar,' 'uncouth,' 'uncultured,' even 'primitive.' With the objectification, even demonization of the 'popular,' undoubtedly, 'popular culture' moved to the subterranean *zones of the Western living traditions. No wonder, when 'comedia dell* arte' surfaced in the medieval Italy as a popular form of dramatic

improvisation, it could only find its articulation as a '*nukkad natak*;' its performance space coinciding not so much with the hallowed precincts of the church, but circumscribed instead by the unofficial, market or public square. To my mind, this kind of marginalization of the 'popular discourse' had two distinct implications; while de-legitimizing the 'popular,' it paved the way for the legitimization of the 'dominant,' which, through history, has very closely been tied to the ideology of the royalty, nobility, aristocracy, in particular, and the ruling establishment, in general.

Therefore, when the historians of 'popular culture' term it as a 20th century American phenomenon, emphasizing that it has no precedent or archival history of any kind in cultures other than Western, this assumption becomes questionable. My point is that popular culture came into existence much before the idea of America was constructed, and that it has had presence not only in the Western discourse but discourses of other cultures, too. To set up a direct equation between the 'popular culture' and the Jazz or Hippie generations of America or the working class in the West, is not only a total denial of history but a misreading of the literary and social practices of virtually all living cultures, other than Western. Of course, if we associate 'popular culture' with 'mass media,' then certainly it is a post-technological phenomenon. However, if we are willing to extend the notion of mass-media to incorporate the notion of visual culture, then perhaps we shall have to think of ancient cave paintings, wall murals, sculptors at Ajanta and Ellora, too, as expressions of visual/popular culture. However, if 'orality' is to be treated as one of the features of 'popular culture,' then it could be said to have a history as old as that of the oral literatures. To carry this idea to its logical conclusion, we may then think of *Ramlila* (based upon the canonical text *The Ramayana*) and paintings, dramatic compositions and children's stories (based upon *The Mahabharata*) as instances of popular culture, too.

Let me now return to yet another book of John Storey on Popular Culture. Undoubtedly, he has done some seminal work in this area and so deserves serious attention from us. In his extremely well-conceived, well-argued book, *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* (Blackwell, 2007), John Storey suggests how the 'folk culture' had actually begun to emerge as a subject of special inquiry and investigation among the 18th century European intellectuals. (It is ironic, isn't it that 'folk culture' was not the invention of the people, but the intellectuals, a fact Roger Cartier, a French historian also corroborates). John Storey further emphasizes that there were mainly

two reasons for this growing trend, one, the collapse of a sense of community owing to industrialization and urbanization, two, a surge of nationalism sweeping through most parts of Europe, culminating into a genuine need for a very specific cultural identity. To some extent, we find evidence of both in the Preface of Wordsworth, especially when he lays stress upon using "the real language of men" or restoring to poetry the simplicity and spontaneity of unlettered peasants and leech-gatherers. However, these efforts at the revival or retrieval of the 'folk culture' received a severe setback with the spread of education and literacy, and consequent democratization of the British society in the 19th century. No wonder, Matthew Arnold saw in it a real possibility of social anarchy, which, in turn, compelled him to advocate the cause of high-brow, bourgeoisie culture, thus dismissing all notions of 'popular' or 'folk' culture as perverted forms of philistinism. Though 20th century marked the advent of modernism, yet as far as the 'popular culture' was concerned, it continued to be treated as a 'pariah' term, little understood, but easily dismissed, even demonized.

In a manner of speaking, Eliot and F.R. Leavis, through their insistence upon the continuation of 'The Great Tradition' did nothing to pull 'popular culture' out of a limbo into which it had sunk in the 19th century. So shrill was their rhetoric in support of the dominant, hegemonic culture, and so persuasive their logic for its legitimization that if they had their way, they would have probably buried this whole idea of 'popular culture,' with an indecent haste. But that was not to be. In the early 1920s, 'popular culture' unexpectedly reared its head in the U.S., with an entire generation tapping to the vibrant, sinewy 'blues' of the melodious Jazz. It is important to note here that though it essentially started as a counter-culture, the music of the blacks, Jazz didn't take long to move from 'the bars and brothels' of New Orleans to the more respectable auditoria for 'vaudevilles,' ultimately finding social and cultural approbation at Carnegie Hall, New York. If I have digressed from the main point to recount this short history of Jazz music in the U.S. it is essentially to make an important observation about popular culture; i.e., often what is designated as 'popular culture' starts as a 'counter-culture' or a 'culture of protest,' soon becomes subversively popular, and then either threatens to join the mainstream culture, or is inevitably subsumed by it.

What I'm suggesting is that 'popular culture' is only 'popular' at a particular point of time in history, and that it emerges in response to a set of specific social or historical conditions present in a particular culture. In other words, popular culture may not ever start off as an

'episteme,' but it certainly does have the potential to become one. So long as it doesn't become an episteme, it continues to exist in a particular culture as an aberration, or as the 'Other' of the High Culture. And so long as it continues to be the 'Other,' it remains a victim of the politics of cultural exclusion. So far, we have only attempted to see the distinction between the folk and the popular cultures, that too, vis-à-vis, mainstream or dominant notions of culture. To put a slightly fine point on this distinction, let me say, that the notion of 'folk culture' is born out of man's primeval desire to create, capture or retrieve a sense of community that he has lost through the processes of progress and urbanization, while 'popular culture' starts off as a 'niche culture,' catalyzed by a combination of social and historical factors operating within a given context.

In the early 1930s, when the Europe was beginning to succumb to the multiple seductions of the mass media, the exponents of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theorists such as Adorno, Marcuse and Horkheimer stepped in quickly to introduce yet another term into our lexicon i.e. 'mass culture.' Undoubtedly, in their diverse theoretical writings, they have provided a trenchant and systematic critique of the mass culture. For them, 'mass culture' was largely the product of mass production of objects, images, arts and artifacts, a process that suffered the twin limitations of 'fetishization' and 'commodification.' As mass culture, according to them, was largely machine-made, it resulted in equally mechanical, thoughtless and choice-less processes of mass consumption. So much so that it became a way of denuding a living being of his soul, a mode of de-personalizing an individual, reducing him to 'one dimensional organizational man.' This is where, they averred, the de-humanizing impulse of the mass culture ultimately became self-evident. Marcuse is known to have identified a life-denying 'Thanatos' with mass culture, thus equating it with 'mass suicide' of a race, a society or a nation. On the contrary, he believed, the 'popular culture' is not only life-giving and soul-nourishing, but also a vital and irrepressible expression of the people's Eros.

While this distinction between mass and popular culture, as advanced by the Frankfurt school, was extremely invaluable, it did little to either rehabilitate or promote the concept of popular culture. As a matter of fact, the term 'popular culture' gained a degree of respectability only through the efforts of such cultural theorists as Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, that too, around late 1950s or early 60s. In one of his early works, *Culture and Society* (1951), we find Raymond Williams anticipate the notion of 'popular culture' in his

concept of 'expanding culture.' He says, "We live in an expanding culture, yet we spend much of our lives repeating the facts, rather than seeking to understand its nature and function." (iv). It is another matter that his magisterial pronouncements with regard to 'popular culture' emerged only in one of his later essays, viz., "Culture is Ordinary" in which he postulates that culture must be wrested from "the privileged space of artistic production and specialist knowledge" and move directly "into the lived experience of everyday." It is a well-known fact that Raymond Williams, along with Hoggart and Stuart Hall, was largely responsible for institutionalizing 'popular culture' too, which they did by setting up the Centre of Cultural Studies at Birmingham, way back in 1964. This is how 'popular culture' invaded the academy, creating gaps and fissures within the hallowed notion of the classical and/or canonical literature.

In a way, with the emergence of Cultural Studies as an independent, autonomous discipline, two things happened almost simultaneously; one, the proletarianization of culture, and two, institutionalization of popular culture. Ironically, it is with this institutionalization of popular culture that 'culture' has finally stepped off its high-end rostrum; shed its exclusivity, its elitism, and made a bid to enter the all-pervasive, all-inclusive domain of "everydayness," which as Stuart Hall puts succinctly is "all those things that people do or have done – the cultural norms, customs and folkways of the people." (234). In his "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," Stuart Hall suggests that 'popular' is not "uni-accentual" as it is often believed to be, but multi-accentual" in nature. He further suggests that it has to be posited as "a site of containment and resistance." a position that reiterates the politicization, even radicalization of the 'popular.' For him, "popular is a battleground" where "cultural power and domination have real effects," despite being not all-powerful or all-inclusive. Stuart Hall has certainly managed to enlarge our understanding of the 'popular' by linking it up to the notions of 'representation,' 'cultural positioning,' 'cultural identity' and 'cultural politics,' especially in a multicultural society. Thus, he has not only revolutionized the 'popular,' but also opened up personal/social/cultural spaces for its articulation, which it apparently had no access to, earlier.

Let me say, by way of conclusion, that cultural theorists, now-a-days, are no arm-chair intellectuals who pontificate on 'culture' from their theoretical high-ground, but men-about-town, who observe all that is happening in their backyard, even trail multiple practices or discordant articulations of the 'popular,' before they start theorizing.

Whether it is Frederic Jameson, responding to the "postmodern culture as a byproduct of late capitalism" or Roland Barthes discussing fashions or food, cooking or clothes, wrestling or other sports; everyone has had ears close to the ground. Not only do they listen to the voices from the ground, but also help us decode the complex eclecticism of Jazz rhythms, hip-hop and rock-n-roll; of news headlines, ad commercials and soap operas; of half-clad women gyrating to the dissonance of remixes, of misquoted scraps of classics intermingling merrily with the Gothic, and so much more that surrounds us. Let's admit that we are poised at a critical juncture in history, when the 'popular' can simply not be wished away.

(Keynote Address delivered at D. A. V College, Bathinda in a National Seminar on Popular Culture and Literary Studies)

Jazz and the Jazz Age in *The Great Gatsby*

— Harpreet Gill

F. Scott Fitzgerald's magnum opus, *The Great Gatsby*, exposes the emotional sterility, parasitic relationships, promiscuity, forced gaiety, disillusionment, and hedonistic lifestyles that plagued the rich and glamorous during the Jazz Age. Lauded as the prophet and the "laureate of the age" Fitzgerald achieves a remarkable blend of hope engulfed by cynicism in *The Great Gatsby* (Perkins 397). He not only gave the age its name – the Jazz Age, but also announced its corruption. The post-war American society in the novel is a cultural and moral wasteland, enshrouded in the glamour and the extravagance of the glitterati.

The tragedy in *The Great Gatsby* is the loss of illusions. The casualness with which people treat feelings, not only reflects their "moral inertia" (Chambers 107) but also leads to a disastrous end for anyone who is in emotional contact with them. Jay Gatsby is an eternal romantic in a brutal world where emotions are fickle and love transient. His selflessness and innocence is crushed in a world sans emotions. *The Great Gatsby* is seen as the social critique of the 'Roaring Twenties.' Fitzgerald set the narrative in the summer of 1922, which he regarded as the peak year of the Jazz Age. In his article, "Echoes of the Jazz Age" he wrote, "May one offer in exhibit the year 1922! That was the peak of the younger generation ..." (*The Crack-Up* 9).

Music plays a significant role in the novel and this study endeavours to look into the role of jazz in *The Great Gatsby* against the background of the Jazz Age. Jazz to some is the "quintessential American music," an authentic creation of the American soil and *The Great Gatsby* is hailed by many as the "great American novel." Jazz celebrates individualism and self-expression which are the hallmarks of the Jazz Age as depicted in the text. The objective of the study is to see how jazz operates at various levels in the novel.

But, what is Jazz? And how is it 'quintessential American music'? Jazz originated in New Orleans, Louisiana, United States, around 1900. Rooted in blues, it has its roots in the folk music of the former slaves of the South and their descendants. According to musician Wynton Marsalis, Jazz is "something Negroes invented ... the nobility of the race put into sound ... jazz has all the elements, from the spare and penetrating to the complex and enveloping" (Burns). He adds that it deals with the African American's painful past in a musical way and celebrates life. Blues was an individualistic singing style of the black

refugees from the Mississippi delta. A singer singing Blues could be singing about anything: a beautiful woman, an evil boss, a natural calamity, or any experience. Every song was expected to tell a story. Blues was about freedom, it was personal, it was individualistic - it was American.

Jazz was coming together of all these elements: the music of the slaves from the Congo Square, early 'jazzmen' of Storyville, classical training of the creoles, blues, rag time, and much more. There is a common saying "this is Jazz this is what we do. It is beautiful and it is terrible." Jazz for Duke Ellington, the renowned jazz singer, was "Negro music" which was dissonant in nature, because "dissonance is our way of life, *we are apart and an integral part*" (Burns). *This music expressed the* realty and truth of the African American experiences and that is how it got its raw edge. Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* is also baring the 'truth' of the American dream, its corruption and its innocence and what better means than to pick on music created out of life! Jazz more than any other art form of the times captures the paradox and dualism of the American dream.

The carnage of World War I shattered the old order and fragmented the society. Gertrude Stein aptly refers to the post-war generation as a "lost generation of men and women adrift in a chaotic hell of their own solipsism" (Bradbury 199). However, it was an affluent American society. The stock markets were rising and businesses were flourishing. Around this time, Harlem became the capital of black cultural revival – Harlem Renaissance. African art and culture was reflected in painting, sculpture and music. The "regenerative beauty of African art" (Childs 115) was felt in all creative arts. The younger generation no longer had any faith in the established norms and looked for novelty. Jazz offered them a way to break away from the Victorian past and it was American. Jazz after the War became the sound track of the modern American world. World War ended and the Jazz Age began. Ezra Pound's battle cry "Make it new!" was characterised in jazz. Modernism is noted for its "experimentation, its complexity ... and for its attempt to create a 'tradition of the new'" (Childs 14). Jazz, was indeed, creating a new American tradition.

Jazz had it all. It was individualistic, it was personal, and it had soul. Extemporization was at the centre of jazz. The players improvised as they played along. Never before was such art created on the spot. Jazz unleashed musical anarchy and held the country spellbound. Picasso painted his collage and multiple perspectives; Jazz offered a musical collage and different points of view. As Townsend says, "The diversity of jazz repertoire can be seen as a metaphor for American social diversity" (31). Though embedded in Negro history, jazz can be

seen as the first democratic music, where members of all races, colours brought something new and not only created something different but endeavoured to make a difference. Jazz Age came to symbolize nonconformist ideals and jazz became the medium for a generation expressing their liberal attitudes. Gatsby's parties almost represent this 'collage' and 'multiple perspective' of the contemporary society.

Materialism, hedonism, and individualism were pervasive in the Roaring Twenties and *The Great Gatsby* captures "a whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure ..." (Parkinson 14). The use of jazz in the novel is woven so beautifully that it operates at multiple levels. Jazz is evident in Gatsby's parties; the description of characters, especially Daisy and Gatsby; and the references of the popular songs enhance and dramatise the action. In fact, the whole novel is interspersed with the words and expressions classically associated with jazz.

Gatsby's famous parties have it all: jazz, dancing, young flappers, drinking, smoking, and living life king size. Gatsby, in his naivety, had half expected Daisy to walk into one of his parties, but that did not happen. His parties are the microcosm which not only exposes Gatsby's desires and illusions but also the hollowness and decadence of the society. The jazz played at Gatsby's parties simultaneously invokes and represses sexuality, just as Gatsby acts on and represses his desire for Daisy. The parties are also an important reflection of the times. The crowd in these parties plays as important a role as the main characters not only depict the corruption in the society but also the freedom and individualism. In the parties, "voices sang, and there was laughter from unheard jokes, and lighted cigarettes made unintelligible circles inside" (64). The notes of "oboes, trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums" are heard through the night. Jazz was sensuous and passionate at the same time fun to dance to. The men and women who danced to it would flail their arms and move about with wild energy. Like the music, the dance too became a new freedom of expression and led men and women of the time to express themselves with an abandon.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath" (46).

Intoxication is the very essence of this society. In all the parties and even otherwise in the novel, alcohol flows freely. It highlights the failure of the Prohibition Bill of 1920. Prohibition achieved all that it

wanted to prevent and actually paved way and accelerated the already fast growing bohemian culture. Prohibition led to loss of respect for the law, corruption became rampant, and bootlegging almost seemed like a respectable and legitimate business. Thus, the lines of "demarcation between legal and illegal, moral and immoral, became confused" (Parkinson 13). Bootleggers became the heroes in fiction, Jay Gatsby, being the classic example. People drank with an abandon at Gatsby's parties, at Myrtle's house, in Daisy and Tom's house and even on the fateful day at the Plaza enough alcohol is consumed before the tragedy strikes.

Jazz is coming together of diverse elements; Gatsby's parties too are an amalgamation of all kinds of people. The crowds in his mansion are the people from the East and the West Egg, struggling actors, films makers, musicians, bond men, people of many colours, nationalities, etc. All "came for the party with simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission." Jazz opened up spaces that were closed earlier; it led to new possibilities and intermingling of various groups; at least attempted to do so. Similarly, the East and the West Egg, the two different worlds in the text, socialize at Gatsby's parties. People's reaction to the intermingling of people is similar to the social reaction to jazz – some loved it and some hated it. Nick Carraway, a southerner, accepts such a world; however, Daisy Buchanan was "offended" by it. She "saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand" (114). And for Tom Buchanan he saw Gatsby's parties as a "menagerie."

Daisy, the great love of Gatsby's life, who epitomises the world he deems as perfect, is described using two most important aspects of the Jazz Age, namely jazz and money. Like the elusive American dream, Daisy's voice is "thrilling." Nick, the narrator of the novel, describes,

> It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. ...there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered 'Listen,' ... (15)

Her voice, like jazz, had notes 'that will never be played again,' since improvisation was the core of jazz; the musicians improvised as they played along. At another of Gatsby's party, "Daisy began to sing with the music in a husky, rhythmic whisper, bringing out a meaning in each word that it had never had before and would never have again. When the melody rose her voice broke up sweetly, following it, in a way contralto voices have, and each change tipped out a little of her warm human magic upon the air"(115). This was jazz.

Gatsby's love for Daisy reminds Nick of "an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words" (118). Why is it that Gatsby can't forget Daisy? According to Nick, "that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn't be over-dreamed – that voice was a deathless song" (102). Jazz, the soul of the Afro-American experience, too will never die even when they are completely marginalised. The reality of jazz and their past is a 'deathless song.'

The novel is scattered with music. The diction in the text is laced with jazz. Daisy calls Nick, "an absolute rose," to which he adds that he is nothing like 'a rose,' adding that Daisy was only "extemporizing" (21). As mentioned earlier, the expression is at the very heart of jazz. At another point in the novel, the accident and the following traffic chaos created by careless drivers results in "a harsh, discordant din." Phrases like the "melodious names," "roaring noon," "finally by a burst of Jazz as the dancing began," and "the effort of answering broke the rhythm of his rocking" are interspersed in the narrative. In the Plaza episode, Nick again uses jazz to highlight the sweltering atmosphere in the room: "From the ballroom beneath, muffled and suffocating chords were drifting up on hot waves of air;" these are the very adjectives that capture the atmosphere in the room where Gatsby is going to be crushed by his vision and dream.

Songs also play a significant role in the novel. "Sheik of Araby" is heard after Jordan has finished telling Nick about Daisy and Gatsby's past; the sun has gone down and the song can be heard in the background. The song is the very demand Gatsby has from Daisy, "I'm the Sheik of Araby / Your love belongs to me." Gatsby, "wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.'" (117). Gatsby and Daisy's reunion is celebrated by Klipspringer playing Raymond B. Egan, and Gus Kahn's "Ain't We Got Fun?" The impossibility of Gatsby's dream, "the store up in his ghostly heart" (103), is reflected through Klipspringer's inability to sing the perfect melody just as Gatsby will fail in his quest of a 'perfect romance.' The lyrics celebrate the morning and the evening of their love before it enters its night. "In the morning, / In the evening, / Ain't we got fun." The last stanza of the song captures the spirit of the novel:

Ain't we got fun?
Times are so bad and getting badder
Still we have fun
There's nothing surer
The rich get rich and the poor get laid off
In the meantime
In between time
Ain't we got fun?

Another song in the novel, "Beale Street Blues" sings of the blues and paradoxes of the American dream. It is not merely Gatsby's dream that 'tumbled short' but also the American dream. Like Gatsby's love, that dream too has reached the twilight and is now reminiscent of the ghostly past. "Three o'clock in the Morning" is the song that is being played when Daisy is leaving Gatsby's party. She is in love with him and yet appalled by his world. The contrast between their worlds is evident and the chances of them coming together appear to be a distant dream.

It's three o'clock in the morning,
We've danced the whole night through!
And daylight soon will be dawning,
Just one more waltz with you.

That melody so entrancing
Seems to be made for us two.
I could just keep right on dancing
Forever dear with you.

.....
It's three o'clock in the morning,
We've danced the whole night through!
And daylight soon will be dawning,
.....
Forever dear with you.

The song captures Gatsby's yearning for Daisy; it is obvious that Daisy wants him too. However, she failed to understand that there were 'romantic possibilities in his world' that were totally absent from hers and consequently cannot grasp, "what was it up there in the song that seemed to be calling her inside?" (116). However, the song also indicates that the dawn will soon end the evening of their love.

Jazz also provided women an outlet for rebellion. They rejected the tradition of placing higher moral responsibilities on them. As the popularity of jazz went up, so did the skirts of women. It created a new fashion for them. The hemlines went up and the waistlines dropped to the hips. The dress was loosely fitted, the upper and lower body movement was essential for dancing Charleston. Thus jazz led to the Age of Flappers. Free women, fought and won suffrage, and danced towards their independence. Women "bobbed" their hair; undoubtedly it was a mark of rebellion but it was also practical to cut your hair short in order to dance. The hairstyles of the pre-war era were unsuitable for a vigorous dance like the Charleston. Flappers dominate the novel, be it Daisy, Jordan or the scores of women in Gatsby's parties.

Fitzgerald describes the women as "confident girls who weave here and there" (46) and then seizing "a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco, dances out alone on the canvas platform." The women dancing alone appear again when he adds, "a great number of single girls dancing individualistically," which reflects their confidence and boldness. In these parties they drink, dance, and sing with an abandon; they nonchalantly meet men and forget about them; and have fights with men claiming to be their husbands. At some point in the party there is a "momentary hush [and] the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her" (47). Again this not only highlights the adaptability of jazz and its power of improvisation but also remarks on the period, where women demand their space and the society appears to be creating the required room for them. They are making the most of their new found freedom. Tom, the old patriarchal voice expresses his disgust when he utters, "women run around too much these days to suit me" (110).

Tom becomes the voice of the conservative whites against the changing traditions. He comments and feels very passionately about the Nordic races and adds, "civilization is going to pieces," and claims, "we've produced all the things that go to make civilization" (20). He asks Nick to read "The Rise of the Coloured Empires" and stresses that it has been 'scientifically' proved that if the white races are not careful they will be submerged. His arrogance and conversation reflects his lack of scholarship but brings forth the heartfelt feelings of the conservative whites. Tom is the emblem of the Southern Whites; his views are definitely reflective of the Ku Klux Klan. He adds rather emphatically, "nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white" (136). Tom voices the proverbial fear of the Right Wing Whites. Jazz led to bold and liberal culture and with its growing popularity the voice of dissent against music also grew. *The New York Herald* wrote, "Can it be said America is falling prey to the collective soul of the Negro through the influence of what is popularly known as ragtime music. If there is any tendency towards such a national disaster it should definitely be pointed out and extreme measures be taken to inhibit the influence and avert the increasing danger, if it already has not gone too far. American ragtime music is symbolic of primitive morality and perceptible moral limitations of the Negro type" (Bayles 63).

Senior white Americans saw it as "Africanisation of American culture". Some called jazz the 'vice of music' or 'rat music' or 'hot music' or 'fiery music' but whatever it was, it had swept the nation. The

American South saw the birth of jazz and the birth of Ku Klux Klan; the latter wanted to contain the blacks and ironically, the music of the former slaves grew to symbolise Americanism and gave America the Jazz Age.

Nick's description of Gatsby's "blue gardens," where "men and girls came and went like moth among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars" (45), echoes the Blues and highlights how the men and women of the age were like moths drawn to that which kills. The "whisperings" of American dream to reach the "stars" has intoxicated the people of the age and since the dream is mangled in the hollow materialism, the dream is going to be the very destruction of the ones pursuing it, especially Gatsby. He, like the moth, is drawn to the fire; the world of rich and glamorous that he yearns to reach will crush him. Though he appears to be the predator, yet becomes the victim. Thus, Gatsby, seen to idealise and epitomise human faith, endeavours to realise all the life's possibilities, but is annihilated by the same world he aspires to conquer.

It is seen that Gatsby, like jazz, symbolises change, amalgamation, and innovation. He too stands for hope, innocence, and a romantic belief of transcending barriers around him. He, like the music that represents the age, 'has all the elements, from the spare and penetrating to the complex and enveloping.' Both are raw, passionate, and symbolise freedom. Both grew and developed in the impoverished areas, flourished, partly due to Prohibition, and almost captured the American dream. Fitzgerald says, "America's great promise is that something's going to happen, but it never does. America is the moon that never rose" (Magill 499).

Jazz began as the music of the marginalized, grew to represent everything pro-change and anti-tradition and finally came to symbolize decadence and sophistication. Jazz joined the ranks of the classic in 1920s. Paul Whiteman created symphony out of it. He was orchestrating it, "to make a Lady out of Jazz." George Gershwin created the *Rhapsody in Blue*, yet another elegant and orchestrated performance. The music, which largely flourished in wild Storyville, was a success in elegant opera houses. Here lies another commonality between jazz and Gatsby; like the latter, jazz too had entered the world of the affluent and was yet segregated. The music of the slaves entered the elite in their sophisticated opera houses but the blacks were still not allowed to play in it. Their music had transcended the racial boundaries, even when the people had not. Americans had accepted the music as "theirs" but not the creators. In *The Great Gatsby*, Afro-Americans have no role to play. They have been completely obfuscated in the novel and no

insight is provided into their lives. Jazz captures the conflict and paradox of modernism, *The Great Gatsby* captures the dualism of American dream, and together they highlight the black experience and the silence surrounding it. Their music gave the age its name, but they have been left out in the great 'American' novel representing the Jazz Age.

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Cultural Economy of Leisure and Indian Premier League (IPL)

— Raj Thakur

April certainly is not the cruelest of month when it comes to modern day leisure and Indian Premier League, the natural bed fellows of late capitalist society. In the post industrial society there occurs a convention of projecting 'free time' with leisure experience, but the theoretical close reading suggests that the concept of free time has no intrinsic meaning, rather, its meaning always depends on the social context in which it occurs. "Leisure shapes and is shaped by history and the interplay of social interests" (Roberts 47). One of the potent catalysts behind this process being the mass production of packaged sports in the likes of Champions Leagues and Premier Leagues, Grand Prix, Entertainment Wrestling and Extreme Sports- X Games. The growing popularity of sports entertainment culture reflects emergent media and leisure economies, combining global cosmopolitanism with local cultural identities and histories. The institution of leisure has extended the power of discipline throughout the leisure activities, oozing out as an unreflected type of excitement.

Deconstructing the neo liberal confluence of corporate sport, Indian Premier league (IPL) in particular and mass culture reveals that it is consumed within the realm of leisure economy as a popular culture sport. Modern competitive sports have developed in line with the logic of late capitalist modernity. The development is towards faster spectacular events through the packaging and presentation of events for audiences with short attention span. Hence, there has been a creation of new forms of "express sport" (Rowe 19) most spectacularly, cricket in the form of IPL.

Neo-Marxists depict how role of capital is theorized as aiming to run leisure activities on strict commercial lines by commodifying leisure pursuits wherever possible:

> Corporate institutions have transformed every means of entertainment and 'sport' in to a production process for the enlargement of the capital...So enterprising is capital that even where the effort is made by one or another section of population to find a way to nature, sport or art through personal activity and amateur or 'underground' innovation, these activities are easily incorporated in to the market as far as it is possible. (Braverman 279)

The classical view saw leisure as the basis for culture. Aristotle in the *Politics* says a curious thing that the Spartans remained secure as long as they were at war; they collapsed as soon as they acquired an empire. Spartans leisurely hour prepared them for war. For Aristotle, the words peace and leisure came together very often. The western concept of leisure traces its origin to the Greek society and to the Greek word *schole,* "a state of being free from the necessity to labor" (Murphy 67); corresponding to *ananda* in the Vedic age. The concept of contemplation in the Greek sense is close to leisure. Plato equates the notion of gazing at the stars to pure leisurely contemplation, a form of a "blessed solitude" (ibid). Leisure evolved in ancient Greece with the "cultivation of self" (ibid). This traditional or classical view of leisure emphasizes contemplation, enjoyment of self in search of knowledge, debate, politics and cultural enlightenment. Philosophers advocate leisure as a "condition or state of being, a condition of the soul, which is divorced from time" (ibid). The Industrial Revolution changed the concept of time, including free time; the gate way of leisure. "Time became industrialized" (Roberts 34). Leisure-sport practices are thus deftly located within the cultural economy of 'spare time spectrum' (*emphasis added*).

The shift from preindustrial to post industrial society had facilitated pitching in of 'game' as 'sport' (*emphasis added*), a shift from ritual to record and from artifact to performance. Archery, once a military necessity, became a popular sport. Polo, which for many years had been popular with the Indian army made its debut in England as sport. Take the case of fencing, a subject on which a number of treatises were written in the sixteenth century. For us it may be a sport, but for the gentlemen of the Renaissance it was a serious art.

Cricket first played in India in late eighteenth century, imported by British sailors and soldiers is a derivative sport. It was creatively adopted to fulfill political imperatives and to satisfy economic aspirations. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, cricket as a game provided class fractions, in terms of symbolic capital "prestige" (339) and cultural capital- "tastes"(ibid), leading to formation of individual "habitus"(ibid). History draws inspiration from CLR James' epigram, "What do they know of cricket who only cricket know" (308). With wrestling and body building proving inadequate to counter the colonial stereotype of Bengali effeminacy, 'bhadralok' resorted to European sports like cricket and soccer. Parsis and feudal Gujaratis used cricket to climb up the social ladder. Bombay Pentangular tournament was based on communal lines and Palwankar Baloo was among the first Dalit cricketers of colonial India. Princes like Maharaja of Vizianagaram and Maharaja of

Patiala saw cricket as a means of self aggrandizement. Cricket in today's global environment has been altered a great deal by new technologies and revised geopolitical landscapes. Ashis Nandy traverses down this path by exploring the shifting dynamics of cricket, examines how with the advent of free market economy, game has softened as a cultural form and how game has culminated in to "mediagenic and business friendly... showing a growing tolerance for nationalism as the new past time for its atomized, uprooted, urban spectators" (74).

In reference to Walter Benjamin's remark in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* there is an overt shift in telegenic sport from the "cult value" (Benjamin 219) to the "exhibition value" (ibid). Cricket had a special place within the idea of the Empire, "encompassing notions of muscular Christianity, gentlemanliness and what was later called the games ethic" (Nandy 121) . CLR James in *Beyond A Boundary* depicts a cult value of a sport; equanimous to art, an emancipatory force, absorbed a moral code, where "A straight bat" (James 217) and "It isn't cricket" (ibid) became the watch words of moral and virtue. The exhibition value of the sport set in with the growing marketing and ensuing neoliberal trends in cricket; the trajectory of which can be traced right from Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket down to T20 cricket and ICL and IPL.

The genesis of Indian cricket's financial pre-eminence since 1980's is inextricably linked with the deregulation of the Indian media market and a confluence of other factors: economic liberalization, the creation of large middle class, and broader trends in globalization. Historian Ramachandra Guha opined, that the live coverage of cricket, as well as India's success, broadened the sport's "catchment area" (76) and "got more housewives involved in watching cricket, as well as more people outside the big cities" (ibid. 77). At a time when other Indian sports were languishing, television made cricket central to the Indian sport fan's imagination. The creation of a national network became a magnet for advertisers because it opened up the possibility of constructing a 'commodified public sphere' (emphasis added). The focus of this advertising was on the "exploding new middle classes" (Majumdar 405) and television in the eyes of the advertisers, enabled their transformation into consumers . Boria Majumdar depicts that cricket's fluidity in to the realm of mass culture was in a way fostered by "Newly structured hours of work with increased leisure opportunity for workers, the emergence of salaried middle class professionals with a conscious investment in leisure and the growth of commercial culture in colonial India shaped the fortunes of what is de facto India's national sport" (231). This omnibus account of the game within the Indian psyche

makes Asish Nandy opine, "Cricket is an Indian game accidently discovered by the British" (Nandy1). Thus, the development of sport in the 21st century and its relationship to mass media can be perceived in the context of the general industrialization of culture, promoted and packaged by interested parties as a consumable leisure competing in a market against similar leisure pursuits. As in the case of IPL; it gestated as the Indian Board's response to the rebel Indian Cricket League (ICL) of television mogul Subhash Chandra.

Mass media broadcast added the touch of simulation. The verbal commentary was augmented by appropriate sound effects of crowd noises and bat striking the ball to provide the more "convincing sense of reality" (Cashman 101). In a similar context Richard Cashman noted:

> Synthetic cricket distorted the game in number of ways. Not only were fictitious happenings invented to cover a break in the cables, the commentary even falsified the game itself on some occasions... Radio also made cricket appear to be faster moving, more exciting game than it actually was... (102).

The striking innovation involving the IPL is the structure of the game itself. The code of cricket used in the IPL is Twenty20, a recent English invention shortening the austere format of long-form Test match cricket, and even more abbreviated than the one-day game as a more convenient and lively spectacular experience. While Test matches run for five days, Twenty20 cricket lasts for approximately three hours after the conventional working day has ended, and is thus constructed to fit more easily into leisure time patterns and prime-time television schedules. This truncated format of televisual nature is also evident in the spectacularized version of cricket that its rules stimulate.

The IPL schedule is organized along the lines of the US sports entertainment model, with matches played on a nightly basis throughout the season in order to provide maximum prime-time content for its television partners. Teams are based in major urban centers such as New Delhi and Mumbai rather than in the more traditional regions. In addition, the IPL is structured according to the US-based sports franchise system, with team names such as Delhi Daredevils and Kolkata Knight Riders. Cheerleaders are imported and franchises are awarded to the highest bidders (in a number of cases, Bollywood actors) in a highly publicized and lucrative team auction run by the BCCI.

In the light of the above, the mass consumption of sports like IPL today fits closely under the clutches of the apparent late capitalist gush of quickies in the likes of fast food chains and virtual tourism. Whether tourism or sports, leisure is becoming increasingly packaged.

The new emerging cultural attitude towards leisure were given intellectual justification by Huizinga, who argued in his treatise, *Homo Ludens,* that 'play' was a type of an activity that met basic human needs and was therefore an indispensable element in all human civilizations. Today such cultural attitudes toward "play and leisure have been firmly institutionalized" (Huizinga 56).

Cricket has taken over the function in late capitalist societies what Marx believed once religion fulfilled in the nineteenth century -- an opiate for the masses, providing the bases for spectacular shows and circuses that narcotize large segment of the population. IPL as a leisurely spectacle may offer mass gratification and instant sugar hits via its performative codes and the grammar of spare time, but on the flip side they carry the imprint of values consistent with existing economic and political practices, wherein, functions of leisure are manifestations of an oppressive capitalist infrastructure together with its state apparatuses of social control.

Cultural consumption is viewed as centering on fascination with the spectacular surfaces of media forms, the play of ever proliferating and intermingling signs and images. This symbiotic relation between leisure industry and media- sports complex serves an extension of the culture industry, where mass culture takes IPL into custody. The culture industry is the "societal realization of the defeat of reflection" (Adorno 13). The effect of late capitalism has further weakened old power structures of sports. The discourse of sport was once 'descriptive' (emphasis added) and had its own pace much like test cricket. Nevile Cardus, one of the earliest legendary cricket writers would portray cricketing stroke as "poetry in action" (67). On the contrary, hyper competition is the dominant culture of modern day cricket. Ashis Nandy depicts that "Victorian cricket as a cultural artifact was masculine, having connotations parallel to Brahmnic concept of mind, reflecting form over substance and mind over body"(ibid 37). IPL on the contrary, reflects new masculinity of cricket purely built on raw performances, which doesn't go much beyond the commentators melodramatic punch, offering leisure centric bites in terms of ''Volkswagen super six", "DLF maximum" or "Karbon Kamaal Catch" or "Maxx Mobile Strategic Time out", integrating cricket in terms of mass culture and entertainment.

It becomes a "perfect spectacle linear to Indian commercial films concept of 'dedetailing' owing to image bombardment which stands in stark contrast to "classics', relying on particulars and details" (Nandy 142). IPL as a 'sportainment' in construed to its potential to provide exciting and titillating space; whether through cheerleaders or through

its "30 Seconds Dugout Interviews'" in between the play sessions; blurring the line between leisure, sport and entertainment. Similarly, matches under the flood lights create the simulacra of the day. Here to quote Guy Debord from *Society of the Spectacle,* the reality of time has been replaced by creating what he calls "pseudo-spectacular time" (Debord157). This packaged form of cricket and its politics of spectacle imply the coercion of visual freedom. Projecting the "occularcentric politics" (Dyer & Pinney 34) of IPL's sporty décor, mediated sport constantly devises narrative strategies of overt spectacle and display, where "scopophilia or scopic drives (pleasure of looking) takes priority over 'epistemophilia' (desire to know)" (ibid 35). Debord puts forward the idea in close proximity to the corporate sport, where, "The economy transforms the world but transforms it only in to the world of economy" (ibid 154).

Watching the IPL is like encountering one of those post-modern narratives that seeks to satirize consumerism. The player's outfits looks like a collage of flyers, heavily loaded with sponsorship tags. The beautiful baize of the field is defaced by anywhere between five and eight giant logos, one or two on the straights, and the remaining square. Inside the advertising boundary boards, the boundary triangles carry branding. So do the sightscreens and so do the stumps. The fibreglass of the dugouts is tattooed in logos. There is MRF blimp in the sky. A giant screen constantly fizzes with advertisements. Even the banners in the crowd can be sponsored as "Cheer your Citi". The flashy advertisement boards, colorful and gaudy team attires, glitzy show under the flood lights offer a mix visual delights where accessories of the game get the main stream.

Statistical bombardment regarding the vital stats of the player mediates the ultra competitiveness which is at the heart of the over organized sport packaged sporting spectacle like IPL. Vital stats of the players include the number of 20s, 30s scored and catches taken, to the existing norms of, half centuries and centuries scored, strike rate and batting average. Analyzing the performance principle of sport, Ashis Nandy cites that in the new mass culture of sport, statistics are not used as partial description of good or bad play rather the game is played to pile up the statistics- "Individuals reside not in the game, but in the measure of performance" (118). Similarly, purely market driven auction is based on 'cost per run' and 'cost per wicket'(emphasis added). Franchise owners react to the basic laws of demand and supply and this is the reason why Ravinder Jadeja and Robin Uthappa overshadowbatsman in the caliber of Laxman and Ricky Ponting. This goes by the ethics of consumable sport under market economy.

The culture industry exploits the individual's leisure time; it functions to induce the uncritical mass. Adorno asserts, "The power of culture industries ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness" (Adorno 64). IPL in its very sporting/spectacle form is 'staged' (*emphasis added*). Salvo of action on and off the field constitutes what Baudrillard considers as "spirals in the simulacrum of popular culture" (245). The greatest criticism of the culture industry relates to its claim to keep the customer amused. Its allotment of "administrated pleasures and calculated distraction" (ibid 124) is condemned by Adorno and Horkheimer for its "minimalist aspirations" (ibid). Its mediation through mass media speak through frame and here frame is the picture, Mc Luhan's "medium is the message" (Mc Luhan 8) speaks through frames (media/TV) which penetrates the sport. The paralysis of critical thought, they argue, is the price exacted for the mere amusement of the individual and leisure here is mass deception. Raymond Williams "flow" (Williams 75) is quite apparent in IPl's televisual maneuvers, where the goal is not to get the viewers watch carefully but to keep them from turning it off. IPL, therefore, feeds less on cricketing logic than television logic.

While the IPL is reflective of contemporary Western sports frameworks, it incorporates the highly stylized visual aesthetic and potent celebrity cachet of Indian cinema culture, with its match entertainment and team branding. This 'Bollywoodization' (*emphasis added*) of cricket, involving the merging of Indian sport with the entertainment values of its film industry, has diversified the traditional cricket audience, drawing more female and family-oriented spectators and diluting the traditional partisanship associated with Indian cricket crowds. Kolkata crowd in the streets flaunt replica shirt stamped with "Khan-11"; most popular actor and the owner of the franchise Kolkata Knight Rider (KKR). The Shah Rukh shirt, spotted in other Indian cities as well, says a lot about the new breed of fan that's watching the IPL games. Kolkata's sports fans are supposed to be the most passionate in the country, yet the manner in which they've ditched Ganguly for Shah Rukh suggests that the hardcore sports-lover is staying away.

The lopsided allocation of IPL teams is insensitive to democracy and demography. One of the cricket's historical peculiarities is that its competitive units have been based along counties, provinces and states rather than cities. But the new franchises, unlike the English football clubs on which they're modeled, are not the creations of history and community; they do not belong to the fans the way Manchester United or Liverpool belongs. They have been created from the top down and sold as a finished but ephemeral item to a passive audience, making IPL

a characteristic product of the 21st century corporate culture advocating the free market forces disregarding national boundaries. It depicts the pre independence cricketing phenomenon when the affluent Parsi merchants and the cream from other denominations dominated the scene.

Uttar Pradesh, the most densely populated state in India, twice winning the Ranji Trophy (2005-06) has no team represented in the IPL. Maharashtra in comparison to it, has a population little more than half of UP, but two of its cities, Mumbai Indians and Pune Warriors form IPL's so called 'clubs' (emphasis added). It is hard to justify Pune having an IPL team but Kanpur or Lucknow or Agra or Banaras or Allahabad being denied one. On the other hand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh together account for less than one-fourth of the country's population. There is not one IPL team from those three large states in North India, whereas IPL 2011 came up with Kochi Tuskers and Pune Warriors from the southern region. But the choice of new franchises cannot be justified in terms of cricketing logic either. Kochi has a weaker case as franchises could have gone for Madhya Pradesh, the state of Holkar, which dominated Ranji Trophy prior to Mumbai and has a far better record in Ranji Trophy in comparison to Kerala which has the lowest record in the tournament. Apart from the urban industrial populace of Pune and Kochi, its active night life in contrast to Northern cities, makes it a first choice for the 'sportainment'. Considerations such as these, and not the pure competence at cricket, are what the new entrants share with existing franchisees such as Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. The Indian Premier League may be more appropriately renamed the League of Privileged Indians.

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Portraying Gendered Subalterns : Analyzing Third World Feminism in *Mirch Masala*, *Ankur* and *Nishant*

— Nipun Kalia

As a representative or mimetic art form, Cinema is predominantly a realist medium and presents the capacity to reveal the Real in its fullest sense, in its image and process. This ability of Cinema is exploited by the filmmakers to investigate various concerns of human struggle and strife. As a subversive art form, Cinema has the ability to challenge the perceived notions, institutions, mores and taboos by breaking new grounds in the subjects, themes and visual/aural language. A powerful medium of communication around the globe, with its ubiquity and universal language, Cinema can work as a powerful vehicle for social change.

This paper examines Third World[1] feminism from a subaltern perspective, particularly from the cinematically constructed perspective of a low-caste Indian woman who simultaneously internalizes, resists, and subverts the hegemonic discourses of her world. The focus is primarily on the gendered subaltern. A gendered subaltern does not simply refer to a female subaltern. More significantly, it denotes an individual who becomes a subaltern *because* of her gender. I have chosen three films namely, *Mirch Masala* (Dir: Ketan Mehta), *Ankur* and *Nishant* (both directed by Shyam Benegal), which I will use, as cinematic frameworks to locate the multiple oppression of the gendered subaltern.

Mirch Masala is a vivid portrayal of India as a British colony, where the corrupt and lecherous Subedar, the Indian representative of the British colonial government, pays random and frequent visits to different villages with his soldiers, marauding and looting. An intrinsic part of this economic corruption is the sexual exploitation and objectification of the village women, among who Sonbai and Saraswati stand out as they contest patriarchal domination; Saraswati transforms herself into a challenge against the repressive control of her awry husband, the Village Chief, within the family, while Sonbai does not give in to the prevailing oppressive power of the State that is exemplified through the Subedar.

Shyam Benegal creates a sublime and provocative examination of hypocrisy, economic disparity, and the social status of women in *Ankur* and *Nishant*. Through compassionate, yet objective observations of the country's inertial progress towards modernization, Benegal

chronicles the subtle, ideological shift of the villagers under an unfair and opportunistic hierarchical society.

In any given oppressive situation, women tend to suffer even more than their male counterparts. For example, while poverty brings starvation for a man, for a woman, it invariably also involves various forms of sexual exploitation. Belonging to the third world makes her prone to poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition. Belonging to the second sex subjects her to sexual exploitation, physical violence and mental oppression.

Theorists have given various plausible reasons to account for women's oppression ranging from private property and sexual division of labour to biological functions. More and more feminists believe that it is the transformation from sex to gender, which holds the key to answering this question. As opposed to sex, which is a biological marker, gender has psychological and cultural connotations and refers to the social classification of institutions, roles and behaviors into 'masculine' and 'feminine' (Oakley 16). It is through social conditioning that women come to belong to the so-called second sex. In Beauvoirs' words: "One is not born, but rather becomes a women" (295). In other words society comes to believe and reinforces certain attitudes and behaviors which women, or for that matter men, should display. While men come to be associated with aggression, independence and domination, women are seen as sensitive, emotional and dependent (Oakley 49).

However, it is interesting to note that womanhood, especially in the Indian society, has not only been defined in paradoxical terms but also continues to be redefined and reconstructed (Thapan 4). Many scholars have been intrigued by the seeming paradox in the Hindu culture where feminine is worshipped in the form of goddess but the female is devalued as woman. Vijaya Ramaswamy echoes the same sentiment when she says: "Traditional representations of women have tended to locate them within bi-polarities – the public women, the prostitute vis-à-vis the private women, the virtuous house wife. Women are seductive, crafty, and bold or shy, modest, silent and self-sacrificing [...]. Women in male representation are therefore 'frozen' into 'icons' either 'good' or 'bad'" (17). The identity of a woman is so pre-defined and pre-determined that any attempt to alter or deviate form that rigid framework meets with resistance from the society. Women's identities as 'self-denying mother', 'chaste wife', and 'repositories of tradition' are just some of them (Bagchi, 4). These constructed identities serve as smokescreens to hide the patriarchal oppression inherent in them. Even the definition of patriarchy, as given by McLeod, refers to these

"representational systems" through which the patriarchal ideology manifests itself. He says:

> The term patriarchy refers to those systems – political, material and imaginative – which invest power in men and marginalize women. Like colonialism, patriarchy manifests itself in both concrete ways and at the level of imagination. It asserts certain representational systems, which create an order of the world presented to individuals as 'normal' or 'true' (McLeod 173).

Ketan Mehta and Shayam Benegal are the two noted proponents of 'New Indian Cinema' movement of 1960s and 70s. More than a structured kind of 'school' of cinema, this movement is the mainspring of the renewal of aesthetics and vitality of themes in Indian cinema. 'New Cinema'[2] has no real theory or manifesto – but is a reflection of various objectives. These include the desire to adopt a linear type narrative, and a perspective, which is largely humanist and realistic in it manner of presentation. Other factors include a careful psychological portrayal of the characters, and basically an anti-establishment view of the social and political systems of the society – a breakaway from the idealism of post-Independence India (Thoraval, 139).

Benegal accentuates, in *Ankur*, the dichotomy of rural life in contemporary India, which on one hand, harbours the execution of the unjust and exploitative legacy of the deeply ingrained repressive traditions, fettered to the chains of redundancy and the phenomenon of the infringing urbanization flanked by the constructs of Western education and laws, on the other. And he does so by capturing narrative realism and understated, naturalistic imagery and sounds.

Ankur opens to a surreal shot of a modern day feudal village in rural India. Unable to bring his new wife to the zamindari household until she comes of age, a lone Surya, the son of the local zamindar arrives unexpectedly at the gates of the farmhouse and is greeted by the attractive young peasant woman housekeeper Lakshmi, and her unemployed, deaf-mute husband Kishtaya who live in a nearby hut.

As the film proceeds, Surya's seemingly progressive ideas stand unable to absolve the kink in his moral integrity when his physical relationship with Lakshmi, which does not seem to displease the latter, comes to a sudden and abrupt end with the arrival of his young bride, Saroj. Later in the film, Lakshmi discovers that she is pregnant but declines a jittery Surya's order to have an abortion in a manner, which is clearly subdued and congenial nevertheless. Believing the child to be his, Laksmi's joyous peasant husband goes to Surya to ask for some work to support his growing family. Surya, in his guilt feels that the

man has come to accuse him, and beats him to a pulp. This last straw on the camel's back seems to trigger a spate of rage within Lakshmi who immediately rushes to her husband's rescue; the dormant mass of anguish which had been brewing over eons of exploitation and colonization finally runs amuck and in what looks like a violent unleashing of repressed distress and misery of not just Lakshmi, but of all those who she serves to be a representative of, she curses her ex lover as well as the system that he represents; a system that thrives on the carcass of subaltern freedom, a system which draws its life sap from mechanics of exploitation and subjugation. Lakshmi's speech can't be characterized as subjective at any point of time; she does not speak in singular person- she is thus projected as a spokesperson for all like her when she hurls abuses at Surya's face, while telling him that he in no way owns "them", they are not slaves to anyone or at anyone's mercy. This time, she erases the line between the colonizer and the colonized via an assertion of her identity, not just as a woman or a mother or a wife, but as a subaltern. There is no tighter slap on the face of the entire apparatus of colonization than Lakshmi's act of keeping the baby. The film ends with a young boy throwing a stone at a window of the 'mansion' as a sign of awakening.

Nishant is a harrowing study of the power and gender relations in a village that is dictated by the hegemonic impulse of a feudal law that marginalizes women and provides moral immunity for the male landowners. The film is based on a true-life incident, which occurred in a village in a feudal state in 1945. This is a strong and fascinating film, more violent in its denunciation of feudal oppression than *Ankur,* which ends in a scene of massacre of the oppressors. The village is completely controlled and dominated by a wealthy zamindar family made up of four brothers. Into this feudal atmosphere comes a new schoolmaster, with his wife and their child.

In one of the most disturbing moments in the film later, Sushilla (Shabana Azmi), wife of the local schoolteacher, is abducted by the abusive sons of the zamindar (Amrish Puri) and literally held against her will in the local farmhouse. Sushilla is repeatedly raped and becomes a prisoner, forced to co exist with the wife (Smita Patel) of the youngest son, played by Naseeruddin Shah. Rape is an area where sexuality and violence come together by exhibiting links to the power relations in society, gender, class and caste. It is the effect of the discourse of shame that allows men to violate a woman's body and blame her. This is made possible only because of the construction of woman's identity as the repository of the familial/ communal honour and the construction of rape as an act of violation of this honour. The abduction of Sushilla

is made altogether more powerful as it takes place before the very eyes of the villagers who like the schoolteacher are powerless to resist feudalism. Sexual violence is more about power over the victim and is used as a means of discouraging lower class and caste people in their struggle against exploitation.

Sushilla's husband's plea for help unveils a system that is corrupt, oppressive and regressive. Meanwhile the abducted woman has become the common property of the of the zamindar brothers and the abducted woman resigns herself to her fate. One day when she is allowed to go alone to the temple, she unexpectedly comes face to face with her husband. Suddenly her resignation vanishes and in a poignant scene they have the following exchange:

> **Schoolmaster**: "How are you?"
>
> **Sushilla**: "What difference does it make to you? You didn't resist when I was being abducted in front of you? My house, son, everything was taken away from me. You were just watching and now you are asking how am I?"
>
> **Schoolmaster**: "I have done everything I could do. Did everything possible. I made a lot of efforts."
>
> **Sushilla**: "Made efforts? Have you asked about my condition from anyone? I have become a keep in the villa. I am being treated as an animal. They come whenever they are hungry. And I was thinking that one day or the other you will come to rescue me. You are not bothered. But even then you are saying that you have tried a lot! You should have burnt the villa. Should have cut all in pieces. But for that you need to be a man. You are a coward."[3]

The schoolmaster is shaken to the core. He has now experienced the kind of victimization that the villagers had been undergoing through generations. Benegal politicizes the school teacher and gradually he realizes that the frightening ancestral impunity and political influence manifested by the zamindars can only be contested if feudalism and orthodoxy are openly challenged through collective revolution and in this case, violence as a means of self defense. The rage unleashed by the villagers at the end of the film upon the zamindar is bloody and chaotic, bringing about a justifiable reconstruction of power relations.

Nishant is provocative cinema in how it asks a multitude of pertinent questions relating to patriarchy, feudalism and feminism. Though the film does not set out to provide any kind of firm solutions to the many social problems plaguing rural India at the time, Benegal is nevertheless uncompromising in how he approaches such issues. Set

in the rural Gujrat of 1940s – where the spicy red peppers are grown – Ketan Mehta weaves a powerful tale of power and subversion in *Mirch Masala*. The peace and calm of the small Gujrati village is shaken with the sudden arrival of a subedar, who considers himself an all powerful emperor, with his entourage at his beck and call. At his camp, which is transformed into a palace like tent, the all-powerful Subedar habitually surrounds himself with village elders and village leaders, holding court like an emperor. He displays Western objects like the gramophone to show his power and his modern status to the rustic folk. He sets his eye on the beautiful and sultry Sonbai, who slaps him in public in order to rebuke his advances – which only inflames his ardour. But fearing reprisal she flees the scene and takes refuge in the factory where the local women make spices. The old guardian of the factory barricades the strong fort-like doors and defies the subedar's men. The Subedar threatens to burn the village if Sonbai is not handed over to him. The men of the village, led by the chief, Mukhi, are more willing to sacrifice Sonbai to save the village. The subplot involves Saraswati's acts of rebellion. As the wife of the Village Chief or *Mukhi*, Saraswati rebels against her subservient role. Her first act of rebellion is to lock the Mukhi out of the house when he comes home in the morning after spending the night with his mistress. As her second act of resistance, she enrolls her daughter in the village school, defying age-old taboos against educating women. Finally, Saraswati organizes a demonstration to protest the villagers' decision to hand over Sonbai to the Subedar. In this way, Mehta's film skillfully weaves the micro (family) and macro (state) levels of oppression as exerted on women, along with their resistance to this domination.

The director justifies his "audacious use of color... vital and integral to the entire structure (of the film)... the overpowering red of the peppers symbolizes different elements of the film: sexuality, blood, oppression and the revolt" (Thoraval, 184). In the film, the powerful imagery of the chili pepper is interwoven with the women's struggles. Visually, the image evolves in the film from a plant growing on the vine, to a harvested cash crop laid out on the ground to dry in the sun. As the women then grind the raw chilies, the chili powder becomes the end product of women's labor. The Subedar, almost salivating, regards woman's bodies in general and Sonbai's in particular as a spice to be consumed.

Here, the Subedar, as Tax Collector is an embodiment of the colonizer's power; his male desire to devour her, mirrors the colonizer's propensity to occupy the land. His very presence evokes a feeling of anger and fear, the kind that arouses from the plundering of the land. The resistance against the Subedar hence is synonymous to the battle

against colonial exploitation, a battle against the entire system of taxation imposed by the British that led to an increase in corruption among the local authorities such as the Mukhi. Among the doubly exploited women who were at the very bottom of this system, both Sonbai and Saraswati fight to reclaim their bodies, a struggle that eventually percolates into the consciousness of all the other women of the village and they become a part of it.

The filmmaker brilliantly entwines the explosive acts of rebellion of these two women. From the moment that a defiant Sonbai slaps the Subedar, she poses an unprecedented, unforeseen and grave challenge not only to his undisputed authority but also to his unquestioned manhood. On similar lines, Saraswati dares to debunk the Mukhi's notions of masculine authority within the household and before the village. In an interesting scene, the village barber narrates the scenario of the Tax Collector's humiliation at the hands of Sonbai to the ecstatic Village Chief, who enjoys the Tax Collector's emasculation. However, the very next instant, the grin is wiped off the Chief's face when he is informed that his own daughter is sitting in a classroom full of boys at the village school. The Village Chief's emasculation is similar to the Tax Collector's because both men feel publicly humbled by women.

One cannot help applauding Saraswati for demonstration she organizes, which takes the form of a popular women's street protest involving the use of kitchen utensils, items used by women in a private space; banging a rolling pin (*belan*) on a steel plate (*thali*) becomes the apparatus of a public expression of antagonism. The women's action is brutally snubbed by the Mukhi and other men, but the women succeed in having made an open declaration of their disagreement with the men's decision to hand Sonbai over to the Subedar. One can analyze Saraswati's style of protest as a strategy of covert resistance that James C. Scott delineates as "the powers of the weak."[4]

In the ultimate show of power representative of the authority of the State, The Subedar tears down the creaky wooden doors and barges into the spice factory. The drama surrounding the taking over of the factory is shot from several angles by the filmmaker in order to highlight the element of sexual assault, especially with the wide-angle shots showing the recurrent attacks on the factory gates with a battering ram. The death of the old gatekeeper serves to be the catalyst of change in the consciousness of the women.

In an impromptu act of collective confrontation, the women decide to use the sole weapon they have against the Subedar and his men, a product of their own labor, the ground chili peppers. They blind the Subedar by hurling the peppers—the *mirch masala*— right into his

eyes. In her essay "Dialectic of Public and Private," Ranjani Mazumdar points out usefully that "the factory which is the workplace and therefore the public space of the women is turned into the site of struggle and it is no longer Sonbai alone but also the others who decide to fight. The 'masala' (spice) that they make, the commodity that is produced for the owner of the factory, is used as a weapon in their final attack."

In the fictional landscape of *Mirch Masala*, in some ways, the women metaphorically blind 'the male gaze'[3] which hitherto had looked upon them as a hot spice. In the final series of shots, the humbled Subedar is brought down to his knees, resonant of Sonbai's first encounter with him, when gloating in his power as a man and a conceited representative of the colonial power, he had flirted with Sonbai; at the metaphorical level, the women end up destroying the authority of his licentious gaze, temporarily in the least.

The protagonists in these films, the subaltern women of the third world, reaffirm their identities through their final acts of resistance - those very powerful and dramatic moments of tearing down the structures of their sexual exploitation and subverting the oppressive colonial and patriarchal power constructs in the society. In my view, these enactments of protest not only spring from a multitude of oppressional factors which are the off-shoots of a hegemonic and exploitative discourse, but also serve to be a grand culmination of the process of the woman's empowerment through the film narrative.

Notes

1 The economically underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Latin America, considered as an entity with common characteristics, such as poverty, high birthrates, and economic dependence on the advanced countries.

2 In "The Two Cinemas of India," Mira Reym Binford writes, "Although New Cinema is not a single cohesive movement with a clearly articulated political or aesthetic ideology, its film makers are linked by their rejection of commercial cinema's values, themes and stylistic approaches." In *Film and Politics in the Third World,* ed. John D. H. Downing (New York: Praeger, 1987), 148. Also see Chakravarty, *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema,* 235–248.

3 All quotations from the film are taken from the English subtitled version on DVD, *Nishant*, directed by Shyam Benegal, distributed by Shemaroo Video Pvt. Ltd. In India. Unfortunately, the English translation does not do justice to the original words.

[4] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1985), xvi.

[5] In the essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey introduced the concept of the "male gaze" as a feature of power asymmetry. The concept has been strongly influential on feminist film theory and media studies. In film, the male gaze occurs when the audience is put into the perspective of a heterosexual man. Mulvey argues that in mainstream cinema, the male gaze typically takes precedence over the female gaze.

Filmography

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A Study of Naxalism in *A Situation In New Delhi* : Juxtaposing Sahgal's Literary Temperance with Roy's Voyeuristic Journalism

— Maninder Pal Kaur Sidhu

Some of the dilemmas facing the nation today that have provoked Nayantara Sahgal – nuclear weapons, globalization, communalism, modernization, saffronization – have also been the target of Arundhati Roy's political essays brought together in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice.* What is interesting is the striking difference in the approach of the two renowned writers to contemporary politics in general and Naxalism in particular. The term Naxalism is now interchangeably used with Maoism. In her rhetorical prose, admittedly far racier and more gripping than her fiction, Roy takes the Indian state head-on, for "in the midst of putative peace" she is "unfortunate enough to stumble on a silent war" (192). Emanating from the writer's pivotal opposition to the Narmada Valley project and dam constructions in general, which have rendered "millions" who "redefine the meaning of liberty" homeless, the vitriolic war of words is unsparing of the Indian state in its nihilism:

> What kind of country is this? Who owns it? Who runs it? What's going on? The Indian state is not a state that has failed. It is a state that has succeeded impressively in what it set out to do…in the way it has appropriated India's resources – its land, its water, its forest, its fish, its meats, its eggs, its air – and redistributed it to a favoured few…Thanks to us, Independence came (and went)…Democracy, our version of it, will continue to be the benevolent mask behind which pestilence flourishes unchallenged…There is a hole in the flag and its bleeding…as long as we have faith – we have no hope. To hope, we have to *break* the faith. (69-72)

While Sahgal's fiction incessantly reinforces the strengthening of the institutions of the nation through exemplary commitment and service, Roy is cynical and paranoid about the state in totality and paints a very dismal picture of the institutions of governance. Remaining in the media spotlight for her activism, Roy has earned controversial fame for her profuse romantisization of Maoism/Naxalism in her essay, "Walking with the Comrades" wherein the writer depicted them as "Gandhians with guns". While Sahgal has explicitly warned of Naxalism as a nihilistic

methodology in *A Situation in New Delhi*, Roy spent time in the hide-outs in Dantewada, in the jungles of Central India, to announce with a sense of pride how the Maoists had re-emerged "more organized, more determined and more influential than ever", how they had insurrected themselves in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal – a belt that is "homeland to millions of India's tribal people, dreamland to the corporate world". Stretching the oxymoron to its limits, Roy celebrates the victory of the revolutionaries and the failure of the Indian state: "In Dantewada, the police wear plain clothes, the rebels wear uniform. The jail superintendent is in jail, the prisoners are free."

Roy debunks the "sandwich theory" of the tribals being caught between the Maoists and the State, and decries the Home Minister, P. Chidambram for envisaging a plan to deprive the locals of their "museum cultures". The activist-author subscribes to the idea of projecting tribalism and the Indian State as monolithic structures – one eternally destitute in totality and the other insanely ruthless whereas Sahgal has an eclectic approach and relies on constructive interventions for resolutions. Sahgal does not demarcate so stringently between the state and its people, and proposes readdressal to grievances from within the established structures through negotiation, talks and change in policy.

Although capitalism remains a constant engagement with both, Sahgal and Roy, the latter connects the prevalence of Naxalism singularly to globalization. While Sahgal has cautioned against lapping up the whole concept without minding its limits in her novels, particularly in *Rich Like Us*, Roy tears it to bits and pieces with her high satire and hyperbolic tirade, accusing the Indian state of a second by second complicity with its import into the country. In an elaborate metaphor, evoked by Roy, the US is the kingdom of "Rumpeldom" ruled by the corporate "Rumpelstiltskin" now a "transnational multi-gnome" –

> Rumpelstiltskin is a notion (gnotion), a piece of deviant, insidious white logic that will eventually self-annihilate...King Rumpel reveals only part of himself at a time. He has a bank account heart. He has television eyes and a newspaper nose...There's more; a Surround System stereo mouth which amplifies his voice and filters out the voice of the rest of the world, so that you can't hear it even when it is shouting (or starving and dying) and king Rumpel is only whispering, rolling his r's in his North American way. (*Algebra* 145-146)

A reading of Sahgal's text in the light of the scathing contemporary outrage of Roy against the state and its capitalist policies in support of the Maoists, heightens the contrast in the approach of the two

intellectuals to a serious threat to human life, dignity, national security, state stability and other complex issues. A brief analysis of the text under study is in order.

The nouveau–politicos, "attractive, intense and ungrown" believed that "one hypothesis, unshakeable, unquestionable, could be true for all time" and as a result a "class war they had blithely begun simmered in the streets..." writes Sahgal in *A Situation in New Delhi* (16). The reference is to the Naxalite problem. Sahgal has treated with good critical insights, the uprising of the Naxal Movement in the 1960s in the eastern parts of India, which as per the Research and Analytical Wing report has now made inroads in twenty out of a total of twenty-eight states. Intricately weaving it with the other significant happenings in the Delhi University, as a consequence of the derailed schemes and policies of the former Prime Minister, the writer judiciously comments, "Shivraj's successors, playing at revolution, have set the clock back dangerously" (16).

Without mentioning the words, Naxalite or Naxalbari, which refer to the far-left communist radicals or the militant communists inspired by the political ideology of Mao Zedong, Sahgal is one of the very few writers to have intellectually and creatively delved into the controversial aspects of this terrorizing movement lacking all faith in parliamentary democracy. The far-sightedness of the writer, in warning the intelligentsia and as well as the government, of the dangers of the volatile romance between a rigid ideology and impressionable youth, is apparent when we take into account the sporadic re-appearance of this "peoples' war" with a renewed gusto in the present times. The Indian Government openly admitted in 2010 that the rising force of Naxalism is the biggest threat to the nation's security. The Naxalities, in the largest assault in the movement's history, killed 82 security personnel in a planned attack in April and 61 people in two subsequent attacks that year (*Outlook* 14 April 2010).

The war seems to be getting out of its "class" framework to directly challenge the State. Contrary to Roy's claims Patrick French recently made a significant observation: "In April 2010, in the largest Maoist attack yet, eighty-two police jawans, or constables, were murdered in an ambush in Chhattisgarh because they were "class enemies"; every one of them, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim, came from a poor family" (189).Probing deeply into the matter, Ramachandra Guha notes that the sympathizers of the movement like the Swedish writer, Jan Myrdal, were hopeful of the Chinese movement finding its Indian counterpart and thus keeping in view its ideological links the "long term aim of these radicals was the overthrow of the Indian state"(619). For an internal situation to be stoked

any further by destabilizing forces, a wholehearted commitment of the government to infrastructure and delivery of welfare schemes to the homeless/landless is pertinent. This remedial recourse to subdue the spark of violence caused by the friction of idea and economy, is also the clear sub-textual message of the novel.

The various facets of this undercover revolution are unveiled in the novel through the happenings in the life of Rishad, the female protagonist Devi's son and a brilliant student of History in the Delhi University. It is a historical fact that the brutal and irrational methodology of seeking justice propagated by this school of thought under the tutelage of Charu Majumdar, caught the imagination of the impressionable youth, especially the urban elite, and the Jadavpur University, Calcutta; Presidency College, Calcutta and St. Stephen's College, New Delhi became the hotbeds for the propagation of the revolution. The purest idealism was instilled into the cadres to justify the most inhuman of acts they were motivated to commit. A rehearsal of the lesson on panic, "an artist's creation", through the stream of consciousness of Rishad, alarms the reader to the mesmerizing, almost poetic effects of ideological prose:

> This was the violence of the sane with a passion for justice. To build a new world the old had to be razed to the ground. The way to do it was through a systematic creation of panic. Panic to chaos to ruin. And out of ruin open revolt and power. Only then could a new social order arise. Not Utopia. (58)

Rishad had alienated himself from the better-off class, to which he belonged, to challenge the "hoary status quo" of casual over-lordship over the country's resources by a few. The bitterness of the youth about the kind of leadership that prevailed is so intense that Rishad, who "had lived his life so close to the bone of high aspiration and endeavour since his birth" (18) was transformed into a calm, controlled, contained young man totally non-committal to the issues of his high profile life, surreptitiously engaged in living out his pledge to a "sober, calculated destruction". Like many other intellectually sensitive Delhi University students, his social conscience had been smitten and he felt a "recoil from the waste and affluence the country could not afford" and abhorrence at the contrasts that existed around him. Having spotted the "uncorrupted core" with mouldable possibilities in Suvarnapriya Jaipal, "Skinny", a first year student of History Honours in the university, whose house and neighbourhood had been randomly picked by the cadres for raising terror, Rishad explains the futility of hoping for any deliverance from misery and poverty from the political class to her: "Politicians, whatever their political colour, and whatever they piously said, got fat from office. They would never banish the contrasts; never in ten thousand

years build an equal society. How could they, when they were products of the rot themselves, of caste, of vested interests and stinking old ideals?" (67)

Preaching the thoughts instilled in him he educates Skinny further by reminding her that "there is no room for philosophy where there is hunger and terrible inequality...The only way that will not work is with words. There have been enough words. We have to act" (66). Sahgal goes into the intricacies of the Naxal Movement - fool-proof enrolling, scientific training, calculated planning, flawless execution, omnipresent perils, the do-or-die commitment and most touchingly the nihilistic thought process of this revolution. Guha has recorded the Maoist pride in fatality as a means to achieve their end: "The Naxalites had their own Lal Sena (Red Army), whose members were trained in the use of rifles, grenades and land mines. They also had their *safaya* (clean-up) squads, whose marksmen were trained to assassinate particularly oppressive landlords" (619). The novel dwells on the paradoxical nature of this shock therapy which extinguishes life to illuminate it.

Rishad, had chiefly worked in organizing sections of workers in a quarry, fixed in their "time- stopped existence" and "stone –anciency", rooted in the "immovability of the quarry, the massive inertness of the poundage and tonnage of rock they mined and broke and lifted in monotonous head-loads over monotonous hours"(97).His mentor and role- model, Naren, a product of the best school in India, of Harvard and Oxford, with an "intricate map of burns on his back...the raw rebellious ridges with angry pulp in between" dies in stupefying heat in a shabby room, in dirt and decrepitude, with a multitude of mosquitoes, flies, mildew and vermin for lack of medical facilities. The sad waste of brilliance, promise and uprightness at the altar of a nihilistic, irrational, clandestine and erratic movement is brought home by the unfortunate loss of the life of Rishad in a cinema hall, in a hand grenade explosion carried out by his comrades towards the end of the novel. The movement is portrayed as the self- defeating, self-annihilating black hole of civilization.

In this realistic exposition of Naxalism, Sahgal has managed to create the purity and beauty of human life, its infinite possibilities, its mind-boggling achievements and irrepressible imagination, ill-fatedly harnessed to the rarefied brute idealism of an undercover organization. There is an echo of the inevitable hierarchies inbuilt in the complex structure of power, allegorically explained in George Orwell's *The Animal Farm* - the characters come back full circle to the very same process they amateurishly struggle to abolish to achieve their goals. This conversation between Skinny and Rishad conveys the futility of trying to do away

with all forms of political authority and governance:

> "Will there be a government?" she asked.
>
> "A government?"
>
> "After our movement succeeds."
>
> "Oh. Yes of course. Eventually." (68)

Sahgal quietly recommends the idea of revolt rather than revolution - an open Gandhian uprising of people - to express intolerance and opposition of political regimes to bring about positive change at the highest level. If revolution as, Rishad and his ranks believed, was a product of "circumstances, not men then why didn't *these* circumstances produce revolt?" questions Sahgal in an authorial comment (68). The Gandhian philosophy remains the strongest strand of Sahgal's political thought and no revolution is more adverse to it than that envisaged by the Naxalites. The unsparing parochialism of the radicals is unacceptable; Patrick French traces the attitude of the revolutionaries towards the state to their irreverence towards Indian leaders: "The revolutionaries turned against the 'class enemies' of Nehruvian India; even poor Mahatma Gandhi was charged with 'devoted service to imperialism, feudalism and the comprador bourgeoisie'" (176).

The substantiality, universality and timelessness of the unique philosophy of a non-violent revolt, as empirically proven by Gandhi at the social and political level, are being endorsed globally. Sahgal has recreated the magic of this powerful tool of open revolt and would be heartened to witness its efficacy in the most unlikely of regions. The reference is to the recent "Lotus Revolution" of 25 January 2011 when a "loose coalition of veteran activists and rookie protestors" and millions of ordinary Egyptians united in harmony on Tahrir Square, Cairo, in popular uprising to sound the death knell of the iron reign of President Hosni Mubarak (*Time* 14 Feb. 2011). These pockets of resistance culminated in a peaceful mass demonstration which shifted the balance of power not only in Egypt but most of the Arab world. The Sahgalian conviction that had been shaped by the positivism generated by the Gandhi-Nehru alchemy, has been appropriately reflected in M.J. Akbar's observation on the peaceful outpouring of this historic revolt:

> This is yet another Gandhian moment in world history...Egypt has rediscovered itself through the alchemy of non-violence, once dismissed as limp romanticism in the muscular age of colonial empires. Non-violence detached the mightiest empire ever known from its central moorings - India. Gandhi, in that sense has become the philosophical mentor of freedom from both the emperor and dictator in the arc between the Nile and the Ganges. (6)

While Sahgal has creatively condemned the dated philosophy of armed revolution, Roy has sympathetically endorsed the cause through her bold journalistic voyeurism and spirited activism – Roy created a lot of intellectual sensationalism by penetrating the jungles to interact closely with the out-laws and came out forcefully in support of their method. In his "intimate biography" of India, French, interviewed various ranks of the revolutionaries: active and surrendered Maoists; police officers, constables; the socialist, K.P. Unnikrishanan; the iconic artist, Gaddar; the party publisher, a Doon school alumnus, Kobad Ghandy; and the Adivasis, to conclude, on the lines of Sahgal, that this methodology would not alleviate the condition of the downtrodden:

> The portrayal of the Maoist conflict as an *Avatar* type of story – good people with bows and arrows facing down bad people with machinery, one atrocity paralleling or excusing another – was a romantic and spurious version of a complex reality. It was a fatal philosophy...because it was the wrong tool ....The security apparatus of the Indian state was too powerful to be faced down, and would never be pulverized...As long as the CPI (Maoist) continued without a fresh approach the weakest people in the corridor would suffer, caught between an indifferent state and a dated political idea. (188)

Sahgal has drawn attention to the fact that the ideologues of this revolution in the pockets of eastern and central India have remained upper caste Indians, like Devi's son Rishad and his associate Naren, backed by foot-soldiers from the downtrodden classes. In coeval times, French has reinforced the paradoxical composition of the so-called egalitarian crusade that Sahgal had highlighted: "More than forty years after the campaign of strategic slaughter had begun, the Maoist super structure was composed of the same old types [upper class revolutionaries]....Only in the middle and lower rungs of the CPI (Maoist) did you find 'the people' " (189). While the insurgency examined by Sahgal was akin to an internal "anti-colonial" type of economy-driven movement, primarily with a localized assassination agenda, its new twenty-first century avatar is more in direct confrontation with the State. The corruption and inefficiency at the cutting edge, the devouring forces of globalization and the mining mafia have reignited the spirit of the cadres enough for Delhi to take cognizance of their woes. The invasion by the multinational companies and political big-wigs into mining areas and forestland has drawn capitalism into a close confrontation with fire-brand communism.

The support shown by the tribals for the kidnapped collector of Malkangiri district of Orissa, R. Vineel Krishna, a dedicated IAS officer,

on 22 February 2011, speaks volumes for the path the downtrodden would choose given an option. The well-known political analyst, Neelabh Mishra, urging the state to take the path of negotiation to reach its alienated citizens(by using rather than prosecuting, possible mediators like Binayak Sen), concedes that Krishna "certainly is a sensitive , pro-poor face of the state he serves. It's a face that the whole state and all its administration must show" (44). On the footsteps of their Nepalese counterparts, the Maoists put up candidates in the Jharkhand Panchayat elections giving the democratic process a try. This turnaround is a hope that the deep conviction of writers like Sahgal, could change into reality, provided the state continues to create the environment for the repatriation of its out-lawed citizens.

The radical communist movement the world over has got a political beating and its proponents are re-inventing themselves to fit into democracies and changing market economies. The hardcore Maoists in India, too, need to rethink their overall approach, in the light of the current political developments. Having studied the revolution from close angles, French is dismal of Naxalism in his conclusion: "This was a central aspect of the problem with India's Maoists: they relied on dead mantras" (182). While Roy overlooks the complex social composition of the movement, its dated methodology and its dangerous proxy coalitions to naively project its egalitarianism, Sahgal is unequivocal in her argument: there simply cannot be anything good in store for humanity in the carrying forward of a radical philosophy, which lacks the basic attribute "humane".

In this mid-oeuvre text, Sahgal axes with subtlety and profound sagacity the doomed radical practitioners of a fatal social doctrine which has, by now, spawned a threatening sea of humanity in the infamous "red corridor" of India and is rapidly exploiting poverty through the false security of a gun.

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Relevance Theory and New Media: Interpreting Pattern Change In Literary Criticism

—Urjani Chakravarty &
Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri

This paper applies the Relevance Theory enunciated by Sperber and Wilson (2002) to the study of literary criticism which has burgeoned in the New Media, foregrounding the pattern change in the text-interpreting process. It contends that such a pragmatic approach enables us to critically engage with the reader's behavior, and thus facilitate literary study in the digital humanities. Regardless of a literary text's merits or demerits, its key function is social in nature. Further it posits that the New Media, which is a term meant to encompass the emergence of digital, computerized, or networked information and communication technologies in the later part of the twentieth century, helps in evaluating, gratifying, and determining the requirements of a reader as it should be and as expected by a writer. So with these literary forums, literature and literary criticism no longer exist in isolation as in earlier times. Their dissemination to a much wider public has given rise to a new media reader as well as critic.

Literary theory investigates and attempts to evaluate the bases of criticism, but literary criticism itself is a practical activity carried out with the purpose of understanding. The ability to criticize a work of literature comes with experience, by reading and thinking about a wide range of material from other literature and criticism. The critic uses her/his gained knowledge to realize as completely and sensitively as possible whatever is before him/her in the text. The critic aims for generality, consistency and objectivity, drawing her/his arguments from a logical base to avoid refutation. But unless criticism is content to remain personal preference, an unsupported elaboration of gut feelings, there must be some larger body of understanding, some agreement as to what literary discourse is and what it does. Possibly that understanding will only be secondary to begin with, before analysis feeds through into the critics' responses. A literary text is initially an event, an experience, something arousing delight and approval. The critics do not conjure up theory as they read or listen. But afterwards they consider, re-read, re-enjoy; it helps them to map out those responses, think what they amount to. It is surely a common observation that responses are not settled, that appreciation comes slowly, after much effort. Criticism is not a handing down of judgements, but an explanation of the critics' own

responses, their appraisal and explanation with the help of a theoretical framework. And this appraisal is a process which materially gets modified with time and the enhancement of their skills.

The present study focuses on four Indian Diasporic authors Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry and their community review in an online literary forum website www.goodreads.com. This is a new form of literary criticism as is evident from the following example:

The Mistress of Spices: A Novel

by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Goodreads Author)

★★★★☆ 3.48 · rating details ·2,238 ratings ·298 reviews

On a mythic island of women "where on our skin, the warm rain fell like pomegranate seeds" powerful spices like cinnamon, turmeric, and fenugreek whisper their secrets to young acolytes. Ordained after trial by fire, each new spice mistress is sent to a far-off land to cure the life pains of all Indian seekers, while keeping a cool distance from the mortals. Only ...more

Paperback, 352 pages

Published February 17th 1998 by Anchor (first published 1997)

more details...

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friend reviews

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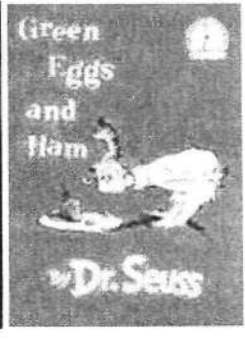
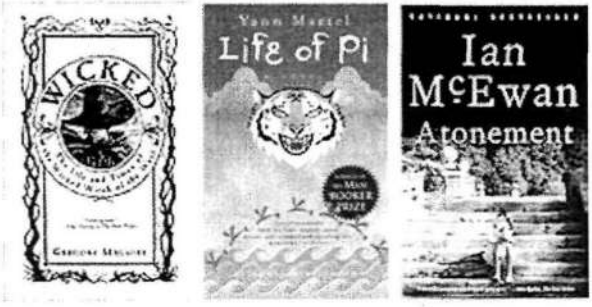
lists with this book



Food-Related Fiction

10th out of 108 books — 130 voters



Abandoned Books
91st out of 428 books — 793 voters
More lists with this book...

community reviews

(showing 1-30 of 3,054)

filter | sort: default (?) | rating details

Feb 10, 2009

Laura rated it ★★★★

I probably wouldn't have read this if I hadn't been introduced to Ms. Divakaruni by a former student who was taking a class from her and loved her. I always feel as though I should read people's books if I've met them, which has gotten me stuck with some duds. Fortunately this wasn't one of them. With a writing style that's both conversational and lyrical, Divakaruni engulfs you in a heady blend of mysticism, romance, and realism as complex and sensual as the spices she writes about. ...more

ike 8 likes 3-comments

liked by

(showing 1-7 of 7)

Dewi Kharisma
351 books
291 friends

Susan
32 books
2 friends

Elhara
777 books
11 friends

Catherine
926 books
34 friends

Ellen
328 books
7 friends

Trish
36 books
0 friends

Danny
41 books
0 friends

The Mistress of Spices
by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Goodreads Author)

Laura's review
Feb 10, 09

★★★★½

status: Read in June, 1998

I probably wouldn't have read this if I hadn't been introduced to Ms. Divakaruni by a former student who was taking a class from her and loved her. I always feel as though I should read people's books if I've met them, which has gotten me stuck with some duds. Fortunately this wasn't one of them. With a writing style that's both conversational and lyrical, Divakaruni engulfs you in a heady blend of mysticism, romance, and realism as complex and sensual as the spices she writes about. The story takes place in a little shop in Oakland, of all places, where an old woman named Tilo sells spices. Ostensibly she suggests spices to flavor dishes, but secretly they treat the spiritual ailments of her customers. Because...(mystical background music)...Tilo isn't really an old woman — she's an immortal "Mistress of Spices" in disguise, endowed with special powers to see into people's souls and heal them through the spices that both aid and rule her. The story of her magical apprenticeship (you're not just born a Mistress of Spices) is beautifully balanced with stories of her customers and their struggles with family, love, work, or navigating a new country. The storyline was unusual, but almost as unexpected for me was to see Oakland as a city with interesting neighborhood characters, not just as an ugly crime capital that I drive through only if I absolutely have to, or if I miss the 680 turnoff and get stuck on 880. Anyway, I thought this book was as delightful as it was intriguing.

Like this review? yes (7 people liked it) flag

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comments (showing 1-3 of 3) (3 new)

date newest »

message 1: by Laura (new)

Feb 11, 2009 05:49pm

How does it compare to Chocolat? From your description it reminds me of how the Juliet Binoche character healed people with her confections.

reply | flag *

message 2: by Laura (new) - rated it 4 stars

Feb 12, 2009 02:42pm

I haven't read *Chocolat* (I saw the movie, but that was mostly because I love chocolate and Johnny Depp). This has a totally different feel, though. Tilo's story is mystical & magical, and the stories of her

customers are very mundane, though interesting — it's an odd contrast. But they're not interwoven into a village story like *Chocolat*.

reply | flag *

message 3: by Dewi Kharisma (new) - rated it **3** stars

Jun 11, 2010 06:23am

Gosh. I don't believe it my manuscript has so many similarities with this novel.

reply | flag *

back to top post a comment »

my rating:

add to my books

about Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning author and poet. Her work is widely known, as she has been published in over 50 magazines, including the Atlantic Monthly and The New Yorker, and her writing has been included in over 50 anthologies. Her works have been translated into 20 languages, including Dutch, Hebrew and Japanese.

She was born in India and lived there until 1976, at w ...more

The Inheritance of Loss

by Kiran Desai

★★★ 3.23 · rating details · 9,866 ratings · 1,808 reviews

"In a crumbling, isolated house at the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas, lives an embittered judge who wants only to retire in peace from a world he has found too messy for justice, when his orphaned granddaughter, Sai, arrives on his doorstep. The judge's cook watches over her distractedly, for his thoughts are claimed by his son, Biju, who is hopscotching ...more

Paperback, 384 pages

Published August 29th 2006 by Grove Press (first published 2006)

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Apr 02, 2007

Sreevatsa Kota rated it ★★★★★ · review of another edition

Have you ever lived a dream outside a slumber during your waking hours? This book makes it possible.I have come to realise that every Booker-winning novel follows a distinctive pattern of sorts that reveals all the instantly recognisable Booker leitmotifs that are vital to the plot: A range of emotions that both flavour and colour it. Thus, crude hilarity, raw sex, untold pain and interminable suffering, not to mention loads of scatology,form the mainstay of a typical Booker story. And the primar ...more

like 8 likes 1 comment

about Kiran Desai

Kiran Desai is an Indian author who is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States. Her novel The Inheritance of Loss won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award.

She is the daughter of the noted author Anita Desai.

More about Kiran Desai...

The Hungry Tide: A Novel

by Amitav Ghosh

★★★★☆ 3.80 · rating details · 1,185 ratings · 200 reviews

"The Hungry Tide is a contemporary story of adventure and unlikely love, identity and history, set in one of the most fascinating regions on earth. Off the easternmost coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal, lies the immense labyrinth of tiny islands known as the Sundarbans. For settlers here, life is extremely precarious. Attacks by deadly tigers are common. Unrest and ...more

Paperback, 352 pages

Published June 7th 2006 by Mariner Books (first published 2004)

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community reviews

(showing 1-30 of 1,662)

filter | sort: default (?) | rating details

Jan 03, 2009

Stephen rated it ★★★☆☆ · review of another edition

I have mixed feelings about "The Hungry Tide." Amitav Ghosh tells a large story firmly set in a particular place—the Mangrove-covered islands in the estuary of the Ganges River. The story has everything: love, class-

difference, political conflict, natural and man-made catastrophes, and, of course, dolphins, tigers, and crocodiles (dangerous encounters with the latter two, friendly encounters with the first). And that's the problem. The story is contrived and contains dialogue that f ...more

like 2 comments

about Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh is one of India's best-known writers. His books include The Circle of Reason, The Shadow Lines, In An Antique Land, Dancing in Cambodia, The Calcutta Chromosome, The Glass Palace, Incendiary Circumstances, The Hungry Tide. His most recent novel, Sea of Poppies, is the first volume of the Ibis Trilogy.

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1956. He studied in Dehra Dun, New D ...more

More about Amitav Ghosh...

A Fine Balance

by Rohinton Mistry

★★★★ · 4.31 · rating details · 12,264 ratings · 2,151 reviews

"India, 1975, and a callous government has declared a State of Emergency. In these uncertain times Dina Dalal - a spirited Parsi widow determined to avoid a second marriage - takes a student boarder and two Hindu tailors into her ramshackle flat. As the cruel policies of slum clearances and enforced birth control bring chaos to the city, the four strangers, whose live ...more

Paperback, 624 pages

Published November 30th 2001 by Vintage (first published 1995)

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friend reviews

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lists with this book

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community reviews

(showing 1-30 of 17,611)

filter | sort: default (?) | rating details

Aug 16, 2007

Z rated it ★★★★★

Recommends it for: anyone looking for a deep and complex read

Shelves: favourites

I stayed up all night to finish this book, because the climax is simply unputdownable. I am hesitant to formally review it because it's one of those few books that can't be confined within the bounds of a critique or summary, and one that is so magnificent and moving that the idea of reviewing it makes me feel insolent already! So I'll just note what I feel about the book, and the kind of effect it's had on me.

It's grim. Very grim. There are moments of tragicomedy, of ove ...more

like 28 likes 4 comments

about Rohinton Mistry

Rohinton Mistry is considered to be one of the foremost authors of Indian heritage writing in English. Residing in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, Mistry belongs to the Parsi Zoroastrian religious minority.

Author photo courtesy of Faber and Faber website.

More about Rohinton Mistry...

An analysis of the foregoing examples reveals a pattern wherein initially a description of the author's work is given and then reviews by readers are invited. We have discussed Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* review in detail. However, it has been observed that a similar pattern emerges in

the case of the other three writers being analysed in the present study.

Application of Relevance Theory helps us to understand this pattern change as it assumes that the criticism of a literary text is concerned first and foremost with the 'cognitive effects' it has upon a reader. The two principles upon which the theory is based are:

1. The Cognitive Principle of Relevance which states that, "Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance."

2. The Communicative Principle of Relevance which states that, "Every act of ostensive inferential communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance."

The second principle is the one that operates in the domain of literary criticism as it may be viewed as a form of communication. According to the theory, the discourse initiator (writer) wants the discourse recipient (reader) to consider what is being communicated as the most relevant, which constitutes "cognitive effects" and which may be applied for interpreting any communicative event. Thus, this paper contends that Relevance Theory can be regarded as a potent tool for analyzing literary criticism in the New Media.

The fact that an utterance creates some expectations of relevance sheds light on how readers may identify the intended interpretation, given that mutual expectations can serve to limit the search space. The reader assumes that the first interpretation tested and found consistent with this criterion is the intended interpretation, and stops processing. This is guaranteed by the Relevance-theoretic Comprehension Procedure and the Presumption of Optimal Relevance. According to the Relevance-theoretic Comprehension Procedure a reader follows a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. In this procedure the reader (a) considers possible interpretations in order of accessibility and (b) stops when the expectations of relevance are satisfied. Simultaneously the writer writes with the presumption of optimal relevance and provides (c) the ostensive stimulus in such a way that it is relevant enough to be worth the reader's effort to process and also (d) the ostensive stimulus that the writer provides is not only the most relevant one but also is the one that is most compatible with her/his abilities and preferences (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 275).

In a similar vein Davies (2000:18) states that readers assume that a literary text addressed to them is intended to be meaningful. Hence if the literary text does not have an appropriate conventional meaning, they will look for a *more useful* (and non-conventional) interpretation.

As far as the reader is concerned, the writer providing an uninterpretable (meaningless) text would be pointless and therefore irrational. Now relating this to literary criticism we first discuss the comprehension process which occurs during the act of traditional literary criticism and then illustrate the pattern change that has surfaced with the introduction of these community review forums.

Traditional literary criticism is a craft which is learnt by emulation and practice. But criticism does not exist in isolation — i.e. it must not only explain the "facts" but combine the explanations into a larger, autonomous and self-referencing whole within a theoretical framework. Criticism grows by resistance, by being measured against the experience of the critic, and it is full of assumptions and preconceptions. Moreover despite a great deal of familiarity with the text, in order to arrive at any kind of interpretation, considerable amount of effort is required in the traditional form of literary criticism. Thus, when a reader as critic engages in the process of traditional literary criticism we maintain that 'maximal cognitive effect' can only be obtained with 'increased processing effort'. Further it is possible to elucidate the comprehension procedure where there is 'maximal cognitive effect' only with 'increased processing effort' in the following manner. Literary criticism first and foremost is an individual effort. At the initial stage the critic has no idea about the text's quality. Thus, a critiquing of the text is a purely intellectual or academic activity on the part of the critic. In the process of critiquing the text reader/critic distinguishes and explains the structure/theme of the literary text. The reader/critic is required to collect the evidence from the text solely. This evidence is gathered from evocative clues such as words/ phrases which are highly charged with meaning in their relationship to the rest of the text. This along with application of different theoretical frameworks to the understanding of the literary text explains 'why' and 'how' it has been written in a particular way. The critic's expectations of being able to understand the literary work is rewarded after a lot of exploration of the literary text and possible contexts with the help of theoretical tools.

On the other hand literary criticism in the New Media has transformed into a community activity. This kind of literary criticism in a literary forum usually wants the readers to understand and review a text through discussion, and also wants them to find information about the text efficiently, even though the order in which the information can be accessed may vary. The relevance of the literary text's criticism in these literary forums is determined by the ability to present concrete information about the reader's response through discussion. Although the inferring

process is the same, the objective i.e. the relevance we look for is at variance with the traditional literary criticism as readers are different.

The pattern change in literary criticism that has taken place with the burgeoning of these literary forums may be explained by this comprehension procedure where there is 'maximal cognitive effect' with 'minimum processing effort' in the following manner. In these forums first the reader/critic gets certain inputs such as brief biography etc regarding the text. The forum indicates how the website rates the writer and the text. This helps the reviewer to critically place the writer and also gain some kind of understanding about this type of work. This enables the reader/critic to look for further clues in definition, another review, a related quote etc. The act of critiquing in the forum involves certain tools which are: Rating it by giving stars and providing certain links such as 'like' or 'post comments' which are given on the page. Other ways of integrating the discussion into wider structures is like 'recommendation' or 'shelves'.

One advantage of this approach is that it shows more explicitly the manner in which expectations are created and understood during criticism. A human orientation towards cognitive efficiency allows the writer or the forum to meta-represent the mental states of others (reader/ critic) and act accordingly. This tendency is exploited in criticism by covertly and overtly invoking specific effects on the critic, knowing that the critic has exactly this expectation. Ostensive inferential communication (Relevance Theory) attempts at communicating—by deliberately providing evidence of one's *intention* to lead the reader/critic towards a certain conclusion—create *expectations of relevance*, which guarantee that the reader/critic will spend the effort needed in comprehension because the ostensive stimulus automatically impinges on attention and elicits, at the same time, a process of interpretation. These ideas are gathered in a specific pattern change in criticism.

In this new approach we have elucidated the manner in which a pragmatic theory such as Relevance Theory operates in the literary criticism arena. We have further been able to explicate the pattern change in literary criticism taking place in literary forums, whose content determines inferentially how the process of critiquing takes place by reducing the processing effort. However it is important to mention that a relevance theoretic account of pattern change in literary criticism does not play any significant role in determining the content of the criticism. Its role is restricted to supply change in form or incomplete representations derived from website information. Nevertheless, the flexibility and generality of the relevance-theoretic approach helps to explain those

cases where changes in the basic literary criticism have moved from an individual activity to a community activity thus creating a new critic in the process. In conclusion, it is pertinent to state that the Relevance-theoretic approach to pattern change in literary criticism has implications for and opens up some yet-to-be-explored directions of research in literary criticism as a whole.

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Revisiting Classics: Relevance of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

— Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri

This paper contends that the 'mutual cognitive environment' which Jane Austen so skilfully and dexterously creates in her masterpiece *Pride and Prejudice*, accounts for its present day relevance and appeal. This claim will be elucidated and established through an analysis of the novel within the framework of the concept of 'mutual cognitive environment' as explicated by Sperber and Wilson in their discussion of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 2002: 249). It is motivated by the assumption that a comprehensive account of how the 'mutual cognitive environment' is created by Austen and the process of its interpretation by the readers should generate accounts of how the text gives rise to particular effects, and it is this factor which explains it's never ending popularity.

Further, it is assumed that this text gives rise to effects due to the interaction of contextual assumptions which include knowledge of class, gender and human traits. Relevance Theory is founded on the notion of *optimal relevance* (Sperber and Wilson 256) which can be expressed as the reader's processing ability in terms of her/his processing effort and its possible effects on her/him during the interpretation process. The theory postulates two principles about the role of relevance in cognition and communication, which facilitate a better understanding of how decisions are made during processing of utterances against the dynamic interrelations amongst contexts and the shared background knowledge or mutual cognitive environment (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:39). The main focus is on the inferential processes implicated in deriving effects, the central claim of Relevance Theory being that these inferential processes are constrained by two principles. The two principles upon which the theory is based are:

a) The Cognitive Principle of Relevance which states that, "Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance."

b) The Communicative Principle of Relevance which states that, "Every act of ostensive inferential communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance."

Society has a pervasive influence on the encoding of both verbal and nonverbal signals, as well as the decoding of those signals during

the creation process as well as the interpretation process. It influences personal and social beliefs, perceptions, values, word meanings and message interpretations, thus directly impacting communication. The fact that the novel under discussion has continued to be popular and appealing to generations after generations of readers for more than two centuries poses a challenge to any theory which aims to analyse the literary text and the reason for its sustained popularity. Austen's novels can be called as interpretive literature which takes the reader, through imagination, into the real world. It enables her/him to understand her/his troubles (Perrine quoted in Sutanto, 2005: Web). Therefore, interpretive literature has as its objects, pleasure plus understanding. A story becomes interpretive as it illuminates some aspects of human life or behaviour. An interpretive story presents the reader with an insight, large or small, into the nature and the conditions of his/her existence. It gives a keener awareness of what it is to be a human being in a universe which is sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile (Perrine quoted in Sutanto, 2005: Web). Of the many Victorian novelists available, we chose to study Jane Austen because she approached writing from a point of view that literature should at once instruct and entertain the reader. Her own convictions and ideas about life combine, therefore, with her lively sense of humour to produce novels that mix seriousness with laughter (Butler quoted in Sutanto, 2005: Web). Additionally, her novels transcend all they touch and thereby create a distinctive, real and consistent world. The settings, characters, events, and ideas of her novels are more than usually homogeneous (Magill quoted in Sutanto, 2005: Web). She uses naturalism in the setting; therefore, the description of the setting seems to be real as if the reader is in that place. For example, the descriptions of the landscape, the city, and the house seem to be real (Magill quoted in Sutanto, 2005: Web).

The paper underscores the fact that insofar as the purpose of literary criticism is to develop interpretations or readings of a text and the readings are generated by evidence from literary texts and contextual assumptions, Relevance Theory can enhance literary criticism by exploring how readings are arrived at and considering how much evidence there is to support a particular text's never ending value. Relevance Theory is a comprehensive account of human communication and cognition developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, which has been successfully applied in the literary domain by several scholars. According to Sperber and Wilson 'relevance' can be described as the property of inputs (such as an item of information, a perceived phenomenon, and an utterance) which automatically

determines the direction of cognitive and communicative processes. It is defined in terms of positive cognitive effects which include true contextual assumptions, reinforcing or modifying existing assumptions and the processing effort required to achieve these effects. The relevance of an input will increase as long as the positive effects achieved increase or the processing effort expended decreases, and vice versa. Further, Relevance Theory is supported by two general principles, the first of which is *Cognitive Principle of Relevance* (Sperber and Wilson 251), and it states that human cognition automatically tends to maximise relevance. Further it states that apart from the tendency to maximise relevance, humans are endowed with the ability to meta-represent other people's thoughts and intentions, which allows us to make fairly accurate predictions about particular interpretations likely to be relevant to others and use these predictions for various purposes, both benevolent and deceptive. The second principle, the *Communicative Principle of Relevance* (Sperber and Wilson 256), states that each act of communication conveys the presumption that the speaker has chosen the most relevant utterance in consideration of her/his abilities and preferences and that the hearer automatically expects the utterance to be sufficiently relevant to be worth putting in some effort to process it. The hearer starts processing an utterance by decoding its linguistically encoded meaning and then, following a path of least effort, she/he enriches the recovered meaning at the explicit level and complements it with derived implicit meanings (implicatures); she/he stops when she/he reaches an interpretation that satisfies her/his expectations of relevance.

Communication, they argue, raises and exploits definite expectations of relevance. They also state that Inferential Communication is not just a matter of intending to affect the thoughts of an audience; it is a matter of getting them to recognize that one has this intention. Further, this becomes valid with the following idea where Sperber and Wilson consider communication as an *asymmetrical* process. This leaves the discourse initiator with the responsibility of handling the communication in such a way that there is no misunderstanding between him/her and the discourse recipient. The discourse initiator within a mutual cognitive environment has insight into the discourse recipient's possible interpretive processes and uses this knowledge to create the input following his/her capabilities and preferences in such a way that the discourse recipient obtains contextual information for all her/his interpretive attempts. In defining the term 'cognitive environment' Sperber and Wilson make the following proposition:

'A fact [or, more generally, assumption] is *manifest* to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true.' [Hence] an individual's total cognitive environment is a function of his physical environment and his cognitive abilities. It consists of not only all the facts [or assumptions] that he is aware of, but also, all the facts [or assumptions] that he is capable of becoming aware of; in his physical environment...Memorized information is a component of cognitive abilities' (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 39).

Thus one can state that a cognitive environment for any individual is a group of assumptions that are valid to him/her on the basis of the fact that those are understandable and distinguishable. On this basis a *mutual cognitive environment* is further defined as, "any shared cognitive environment in which it is manifest which people share it. In a mutual cognitive environment...every manifest assumption is *mutually manifest*" (Sperber and Wilson 41- 42).

Combining these ideas in the context of a Classic English literary text leads us to a highly interesting issue of how language and society (which includes attitudes to class, gender and human traits etc) constantly interpenetrate as well as modify each other; what we can find out about a particular society by studying its language and vice versa, and how this can be explained with the help of Relevance Theory.

In the following section, we use Relevance theoretic analysis based upon the theory of Sperber and Wilson to illustrate how Austen uses the language and recurrent images in her novel to construct the meanings of the character's lives in the places represented. This analysis is a rough approximation and does not illustrate the complex relations and constant interaction existing between our cognition and its manifestation. Our aim at this point is to give a rather schematic idea of the potential sources from which information can be supplied in a communicative event taking place between the author and reader about class, gender and human traits and map the location of discourse-internal information and its meaning within the broader picture of a literary text's plot. Based upon the categorization of the three traits mentioned earlier in the paper, we underscore how and why there still exists a universal appeal of Austen's novel:

1) Gender Category:

1.1) "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." (PAP, 1960:1)

1.2) "I do assure you, sir, that I have no pretensions whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it...Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart." (PAP, 1960:121)

The first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* as example 1.1) stands as one of the most famous first lines in literature. Even as it clearly introduces the arrival of Mr. Bingley at Netherfield, the event that sets the novel in motion, this sentence also offers a miniature sketch of the entire plot, which concerns itself with the pursuit of "single men in possession of a good fortune" by various female characters. The preoccupation with socially advantageous marriage in nineteenth-century English society manifests itself here, for in claiming that a single man "must be in want of a wife," the author reveals that the reverse is also true: a single woman, whose socially prescribed options are quite limited, is in want of a husband. In the example 1.2) Despite Elizabeth's entreaty, Mr. Collins refuses to be persuaded that she means to reject him, instead insisting that her statement is characteristic of female courtship ritual. The reader may view Mr. Collins as lacking intelligence and common sense, yet his behaviour is in keeping with the author's aim of the exploration of female identity and aspirations in much of the novel. The female achievement of matrimony and its economic necessity sustains the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*. Yet Elizabeth's comments illustrate the disparity between the internal feelings and thoughts of a female individual and their socially acceptable exterior manifestations. If 'elegance' consists of dissembling and falsifying of feeling, Elizabeth surely cannot satisfy the societal standard, "My feelings in every respect forbid it". She herself points out the dichotomy between femininity and being true to oneself: "Do not consider me now as an elegant female...but (rather) as a rational creature speaking the truth". The understanding of the author's ideas still holds true because her characters and the situations faced by them were not prevalent in that period alone but hold true even now in a patriarchal society. The 'mutual cognitive environment' that she created in her text can still be processed with least effort because the concept of money and well-being provided by a husband is still optimally relevant. Austen's society is a microcosm of the desire present in human beings which is not restricted to one place or time but encompasses

society's idea for women's need for comfort and stability, which as has been mentioned earlier, is still relevant in a patriarchal set up. In the second example too we can easily relate to Elizabeth as a woman who is breaking the rules set by the society to accept a man when he proposes but not before rejecting him at least once. This remains relevant in today's society as the concept of the proposal being made by man and its acceptance or rejection by a woman still remains the same. The right to choose is still not acceptable insofar as a woman is concerned and the right to propose is still in the hands of men.

2) Human Trait Category:

2.1) "You judge very properly," said Mr Bennet, "and it is happy for you that you possess the talent of flattering with delicacy. May I ask whether these pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study?" (PAP, 1960:73) or "Mr Bennet treated the matter differently. " So, Lizzy," said he one day, "your sister is crossed in love, I find. I congratulate her. Next to being married, a girl likes to be crossed in love a little a little now and then" (PAP, 1960:151)

2.2) "...Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us." (Mary Bennet, PAP, 1960:20)

In the novel, the basic human traits such as that of pride, cynicism and prejudice are the central ones. Both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are disliked at separate points for their pride and prejudice-Darcy is described towards the beginning as the "proudest, most disagreeable man in the world."(PAP: 1960:9) At one point Miss Bingley says to Darcy, about Elizabeth that he should "endeavour to check that little something, bordering on conceit and impertinence, which your lady possesses."(PAP, 1960:56) She is referred to as having an "abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum" (PAP, 1960:37); her manners are described by Miss Bingley as "very bad indeed, a mixture of pride and impertinence...." (PAP, 1960:37) And yet Elizabeth is the main character, the one we are to identify with and the only one who seems to have any self respect. Mr. Bennett is a character who is throughout seen as a person who takes life and its problems with cynicism. He treats all with cynicism and disregards the social norms of a host, father and husband. The characters still remain as lifelike as ever for the reader as the author

used those human traits which are universal in nature and can be found in all societies. The present day reader can process these qualities which can be seen by her/him in her/his own family, neighbourhood etc. Other examples of the human qualities of pride and prejudice can be seen as being embodied in Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth when the former confesses his love for Elizabeth and his disappointment at her inferior social status; "'Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?'".(PAP, 1960:211) "Elizabeth retaliates, 'You are mistaken Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner'". (PAP, 1960:211) This same exclamation of prejudice haunts Elizabeth after Darcy tells her the truth about Wickham and Bingley and explains how prejudiced she was with her quick baseless judgements. Realizing that she had been "wretchedly blind", Elizabeth "grew absolutely ashamed of herself. – Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd".(PAP,1960:229)

2.3) "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life." (Charlotte Lucas, PAP, 1960:23)

This example does much to outline the changing human conceptions of family and relationship. Here, the reader can see two very distinct human relationship ideologies, voiced by Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth Bennet. The two women's approach to relationships are then informed by these ideologies, which are set against each other as two modes of thinking about the role of love in relationships as it has historically been defined in society, and the way it is changing. Much of this change entails moving away from Charlotte's notion of the practicality and economics of relationship has to do with the rise of individualism throughout the eighteenth century; a change that noted the rise of pretentious individualism, meaning an outlook on personal relationships that emphasizes the emotional rewards to, and autonomy of, each individual and his or her personal sense of self-satisfaction. After Charlotte has voiced her personal views which are echoed in the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, the more progressive

Elizabeth reacts with laughter, assuming that Charlotte's strategies are in actuality much like her own, and that she would never in reality act the way she says she would. Only later do we find that Elizabeth is wrong, and see their different relationship strategies collide when Elizabeth rejects Mr. Collins because she does not love him, followed quickly by Charlotte accepting his marriage proposal out of practicality. The concept of human relations is still optimally relevant especially relationship's existing between a man and woman, which remains the same and can be based, either on practical aspirations like Charlotte's or can be emotional like Elizabeth's.

3) **Class Category:**

3.1) "But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world," replied Darcy." (PAP, 1960:38)

3.2) "Elizabeth, having rather expected to affront him, was amazed at his gallantry; but there was a mixture of sweetness and archness in her manner which made it difficult for her to affront anybody; and Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger." (Elizabeth and Darcy, PAP, 1960:55)

In observing the characters' behaviors and conversations in the text, it seems that in society, manners are associated with social class and accordingly with the quality of a person's character. So, for example, members of the aristocracy, such as Darcy or Lady Catherine De Bourgh, are perceived as justifiably proud in their manners because of their status and class in society. The Bingley sisters, who aspire to that level, are also proud and careful in their manners and distinguish with whom they associate among the Bennet family based on manners. Jane and Elizabeth, who display proper behavior, are acceptable, while Mrs. Bennet, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia, who speak and act on whims with no thought for propriety, are rejected. The differences in the Bennet girls' manners could be viewed from a societal perspective as reflecting the differences in their parents' class and backgrounds: Jane and Elizabeth are more closely associated with their father, a landowning gentleman, whereas Mary, Kitty, and Lydia emulate their mother, the daughter of a lawyer. However, the author's sense of irony comes through as she plays with this traditional societal perception of class and manners. Throughout the novel, she satirizes the manners of all classes, exposing people who have excessive pride as rude and often foolish, regardless of wealth or station. In the text, Austen uses Mr.

Collins as an extreme example of how ill conceived and baseless pride can affect one's manners. In Mr. Collins's case, he prides himself on his sense of respectability, his profession, and his association with Lady Catherine. As a result, he behaves in an absurd manner, going so far as to break one of society's rules and introduce himself to Darcy rather than waiting for Darcy to acknowledge their connection. Similarly, Mrs. Bennet appears absurd as she ignores decorum and talks unrestrainedly about Jane's prospective marriage to Bingley. With both Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth acts as the voice of propriety, explaining to her unreceptive relations the proper way to behave.

The social construct of class created by Austen is as common today as in her time. The construct of the elite class of people like the celebrities and the upper middle class interaction as depicted by Austen two centuries ago remains unchanged. Then there are people like the Bingley sisters who aspire to be elite by imitating their manners and style. The author's satirizing the construct of class acts as a further ostensive stimulus for the reader and she/he can process the construct with least effort because even though the class hierarchy still prevails, the struggle against this hierarchy continues.

To conclude, this paper has examined the novel in order to explicate and explain the timeless appeal it has had for generations of readers. This has been done through the analysis of text examples under three categories of gender, human traits and class. This Relevance theoretic analysis of the examples also provides the ground for the overall interpretation of the novel as well as the author's sustained popularity. Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* is still relevant in today's world because she dealt with constructs that are not only universal but also timeless. Her clear and lucid style, meticulous organization of plot and convincing characters, all suggest a perfect order. She astutely combines some elements of humour, drama and moral values in her novels that make her different from other authors. Moreover, she is a 'social' novelist as for Austen and her contemporaries' literature was an important vehicle for social and cultural significance and the novel in particular played a vital role in creating an image of middle class identity; indeed the novel was a product of middle-class society, catering to its interests and tastes. It was also seen as relevant to contemporary issues, and, since these issues were unusually deep and clear cut they can be explained with the help of a theory of cognition and communication such as the Relevance Theory. The theory helps in explaining its value by foregrounding the fact that all the social and human traits highlighted

by Austen in the novel are still prevalent in the present day society, which in turn facilitate maintaining the 'mutual cognitive environment' providing optimal relevance for the reader and decreasing the processing effort in its interpretation. Thus, the author with her universal constructs of gender, human traits of pride and prejudice, and class in her novel, creates an understanding between herself and the reader which transcends a gap of two centuries and which accounts for an effect and appeal which is timeless.

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Understanding Culture to Teach Language

— Dr. Chanchal Narang

In a classroom situation, when the teacher enters the classroom[1], the students may:

1. Stand up.
2. Remain seated but look up at the teacher and pay attention.
3. Remain seated and keep their eyes down.
4. Continue talking until the teacher asks for silence.

The choice of the action of the students entirely depends upon their cultural upbringing. Human behaviour is formulated, conditioned, and crystallised according to the cultural values that one assimilates and imbibes in oneself over the period of his or her growing up. This is especially true in the context of language learning and usage. In everyday classroom situations, the students display their cultural upbringing. Here I would like to quote a personal reminiscence. As a language teacher, I always take the diagnostic test of my students by means of their introductions. The students are asked to write their introductions and then they have to read it aloud. These introductions are then collected and retained by the teacher. This way they make a display of their linguistic proficiency not to forget their presentation skills, their fluency, appropriacy, and accuracy of expression. Here I would like to quote the response of three students as concrete examples:

Student A

Respected Mam and my dear friends, my name is Mehar. I have done my schooling form Lawrence Public School Sanawar. I come from the family of lawyers. My father is a practicing lawyer in the Punjab and Haryana High Court and my brother assists my father in his cases. My mother is a homemaker. I want to crack civil services after completing Law. As regards my hobbies, I am very fond of reading. I generally read English classics and my favourite writer is Jane Austen.

Student B

Hello friends, I am Balpreet. I did my 12th class from D.A.V. public School Sector 15 Chandigarh. I did my 12th in the Commerce stream. My

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1. Ford Carol, Ann Silverman and David Haines. Cultures Encounters – What to do and say in social situations in English. Great Britain: Pergamon Press, 1983.

parents are in govt. Service. When I am free, I like to watch T.V. and my favourite channel is Jabardast hits. When I grow up, I want to be a successful person.

Student C

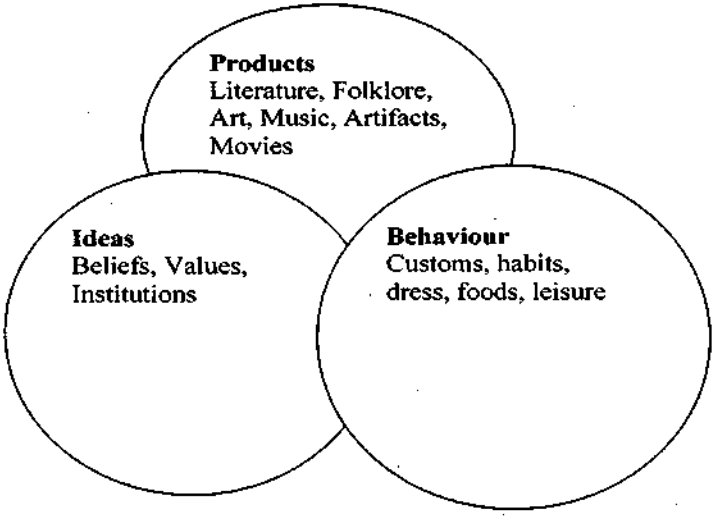
My name is Krishan Kumar. I belongs to a simple family. My father and my mother prays everyday. I never want to miss a class but my friend miss and tell me to miss it. I wants to become big officer in my further life. My big sister is married and my little brother is in class IX.

A mere cursory glance at the above scripts reveals the language proficiency level of all the three students in English. If one analyses the scripts, one concludes that student A is a skilful user of English language as she displays accuracy in grammar, vocabulary, and lexis. Her sentences are well constructed, coherently continued and even her usage reflects that she has good level of communicative competence. In case of second student, the language is accurate but there is lack of finesse in expression. In addition, the ease of expression is comparatively less. The third script is extreme as it not only has grammatical mistakes but it also shows that the speaker is far away from the concepts of fluency in language and ease of expression. The above analysis clearly points out that there is a glaring difference in the performance of all three speakers and as a language teacher, I felt that it is my duty to examine the reasons for the same. I tried to investigate the reasons and found out that all the students have been trained differently and had different familial and cultural upbringing. Their linguistic proficiency was much affected by the socio-economic and religious factors. Indeed cultural factors influence aspects of human behaviour such as perception, cognition, language, and communication.

However, even before one reaches cultural factors, it is crucial to define culture. As Eli Hinkel[2], "... it may not be an exaggeration to say that there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviours and activities. Over, the years, the many explicit and implicit definitions of culture in second language pedagogy have led to what R. Scollen (1995, p. 382) calls "miniaturisation of the concept of culture so that researchers study and write about the culture of the school or even the culture of the classroom." Within the domain of discussion of the word culture, there have been diverse and divergent definitions dealing with speech acts, rhetorical structure of text, social organizations and knowledge

2. Hinkel Eli, "Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning", United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

constructs. Gail Robinson (1985), an American researcher in the area of cross-cultural education defined culture through following diagram:



For the purpose of this paper, the word culture is much broader and deeper and includes all aspects of human behaviour. This paper aims to establish that one has to understand cultural differences to enhance the output in language teaching.

In the context of teaching English, it is never realized that the products of the system are neither going to migrate from the country, nor will they always interact with the native speakers. The learners are learning English to gain communicative competence in the language. The very fact that the exposure of 10-12 years in English (English being a compulsory subject is in our education system) is not enabling them to acquire communicative proficiency suggests that there are serious lapses in the way we have been teaching English. The methods and materials exploited for language teaching are completely alienated and disregard the cultural upbringing of the learners. Neither the content nor the methodology are planned according to the cultural upbringing of the learners. This results in the compounding of problems of language acquisition. If language teaching curricula, syllabi and finally teaching methodology are planned in the ambit of the learners' culture, the process can emerge as much more fulfilling and rewarding. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the premises, I tried to implement this with regard to the 60 students of BALLB (Hons.) Course. The effort

was to improve their speaking skills by making the input culture friendly. In order to do so, a needs-analysis of the learners was undertaken. The parameters to be gauged were:

1. **The background of the learners**: the knowledge of the background of the learners includes the information about their linguistic background, their worldviews, their age levels, their experiences, and their thinking styles.

2. **Their needs and purposes for learning English**: the analysis of the needs and purposes of learning English reflect the approach they have towards learning the language. The basic factors that are reflected are whether the language is learnt for the social purpose or for academic or professional purpose. This further reflects whether the learner is learning language out of interest or out of compulsion.

3. **Their level of motivation**: motivation of learning means the psychology of learning that particular language. Is it Instrumental i.e. owing to the practical advantage of learning or Integrative i.e. personal interest in the people or culture of the natives.

4. **Individual experiences of the learners**: the individual differences in language learners are affected by the factors like motivation, aptitude, intelligence, and attitude towards the teacher and course material and learner's personality (extrovert or introvert).

These parameters were gauged by means of a questionnaire (appended as annexure-1), which elicited the information detailed above. The students were required to fill up the questionnaires. The filled-in questionnaires were then analysed and the responses were used in improvising the materials to suit the cultural needs and backgrounds of the learners. During this process, a very important finding that surfaced was that it was possible to modify the input to be fed to the learners by means of negotiation with the learners. This meant that even with the same instructional materials, if the method of delivery is changed, the output changes drastically. For this purpose, one has to forego a basic assumption that the learner in question is a *Tabula Rasa* or a clean slate to be worked upon. It has to be understood and internalized that this may mean a complete transformation of the traditionally accepted language classroom. The teacher in this kind of classroom would be a friend, counsellor, fellow participant, collaborator, contributor, and a negotiator of the input. The teacher has to have patience, tolerance and respect for all kinds of students representing divergent cultural backgrounds. Once this kind of mind-make up has

been accomplished, then comes the real task of delivering home the linguistic input. So far as the delivery is concerned, following factors have to be observed:

1. Creation of a learning set

This means the creation of the readiness to learn among the learners. This is done by arousing the interest of the learners towards the content of the unit to be taught. The teacher-researcher used several techniques for the purpose of the same. These include writing or developing a conversation or using a short story or narrating an anecdote using the language input that attracts the attention of the learners.

2. Sustaining the level of motivation

While teaching, sustaining the interest of the learner in the language teaching activity is as important as arousing it. Thus it is very important for the teacher to carry on the level of interest among the learners.

3. Learners of various capabilities

Considering the learners of varying capabilities with special focus on their mental age and chronological age is quite crucial for a language teacher. Their linguistic and cultural background also plays a significant role in the development of the teaching material.

4. Use of language very close to the language for everyday conversation

It is very important to give the learners exposure and adequate practice in the kind of language, which they actually need for everyday purpose. Teaching aims to promote natural conversation among the students. Also the students are given practice in language used for conventional greetings and ceremonial discourse.

5. Task-oriented approach to language teaching

Teaching activities should include the tasks which involve pair work, group work, individual work, games, simulations, dramatizations and creative use of language. Also the teaching involves use of external materials like pictures, songs, gestures and purposeful talk. There is a focus on intensive feedback in every teaching session.

On the basis of all above the teaching activity is planned and executed. One of the demonstrations of this experience is detailed below:

Teaching session – I

The aim of the teaching session is to teach the prescribed curricula and then integrate it with culturally assimilated activity.

Part – I

Poem to be taught: Sonnet-XVIII

Nature of the situation: Formal

Total time for teaching: 60 minutes

Effective time for teaching: 50 minutes

Text of the Poem .....

SONNET XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May'
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing untrimmed:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall death brag thou wandere'st in his shade'
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

–William Shakespeare

Activity – I: Preparing the learner set

Total time consumed: 5 minutes.

Role of the teacher: Interlocutor

Role of the learner: Interactive Participant

Teacher's activity: Poem Recitation & eliciting the response from the learners

Student's activity: Interacting in the teaching-learning situation

Nature of classroom activity: Collaborative teaching

Description of the activity:

The teacher-researcher recited the poem aloud to the students and wrote the following questions on the blackboard:

(i) What do you think is the poem about?

(ii) What is the poet talking about?

The students could not describe the exact contents of the poem. However, they could make out that the poem is about some comparison. Then the teacher-researcher appreciated the guess of the students and asked them to substantiate their guess by giving evidences from the text.

As the teacher said, "That's very good. The poem is about comparison. But let us have the words which made you say this."

To this the students replied, "compare, more lovely, more temperate, but etc."

Activity – II: Zeroing into the poem

Total time consumed: 30 minutes.

Description of the activity: (Teacher-student interaction)

After this the teacher zeroed into the teaching of the poem. As the teacher said, "Let's go through the poem once again. Listen to the poem very carefully. One reason for which you have not been able to get close to the poem is language. It is not the language that we use these days. Actually the poem is distanced from us by more than four centuries. So let's simplify the language."

As the teacher recited the poem, the following words were glossed:

Thee – you, thou – you, art – are, temperate – balanced, lease – time, hath – has, eye of heaven – sun, untrimmed – uninfluenced, eternal – forever, owest – owned or possessed, brag – boast, wandere'st – move about, growest – grow, this – poem.

The teacher then asked the students to go through the poem themselves. The students read the poem and then the teacher and the students interacted with each other to discuss the poem and they arrived at the explanation of the poem. The teacher then read out the poem again to bring out the musicality of the poem. The students pointed out rhythm and rhyme. The teacher then pointed out the rhyme scheme of the poem and sensitized the students about the figures of the speech in the poem. Following figures of speech were pointed out:

Line – 1: Rhetorical question

Darling buds of May – Metonymy, personification

Eye of heaven – metonymy

Fair from fair – alliteration

Death brag – personification

Then the teacher told the students about the technical aspects of the sonnet. Also, the details of Shakespeare as a poet and a dramatist were discussed with the students. After this activity, the students were asked to do discussion in pairs on the comparison of beauty in their culture. This proved to be a very interesting as the students came up with interesting comparisons.

Part – II:

Aim of the activity: to increase awareness of different meanings which people ascribe to the word culture and the way the term is used to indicate that people are different from one another; to stimulate discussion about one's own culture and how it differs from others. (Adapted from Tomalin Barry and Susan Stempleski)[4]

Materials: No Special materials are required.

Time: 60 minutes

Preparation: No special preparation is required.

In Class:

- ◊ The class was explained that there are many definitions of the word 'culture' and that they would carry out an activity to find out what the members of the class thought of when the word 'culture' is mentioned.
- ◊ The class was asked to name as many cultural groups as they could. As the students called out, the teacher wrote them on the board.
- ◊ When there are 15-20 names of the cultural groups, the class was divided into the groups of three or four. Each group was explained to work together to draw up a list of characteristics that made each of the cultural groups different from each other.

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3. Tomalin Barry and Susan Stempleski, *Cultural Awareness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

They were then given 10 minutes to do this activity. Here is a sample list:

Language	religion	music	race	national origin
geography	architecture	customs	arts and crafts	clothing
physical features	food			

- The volunteer was then asked to read out their list, while the teacher wrote the characteristics.
- When the students had reached the end of their lists, they were asked which characteristics were applicable to all the cultural groups they mentioned. For example, can all the groups be identified by different languages or by different religions? The students realized that very few, if any, of the characteristics apply to all the groups
- This was followed by a whole-class discussion on the basis of the following:
  - Why is it difficult to define the word 'culture'?
  - Why do people identify with cultures and cultural groups?

Activity III

Role of the teacher: moderator, observer and fellow participant.

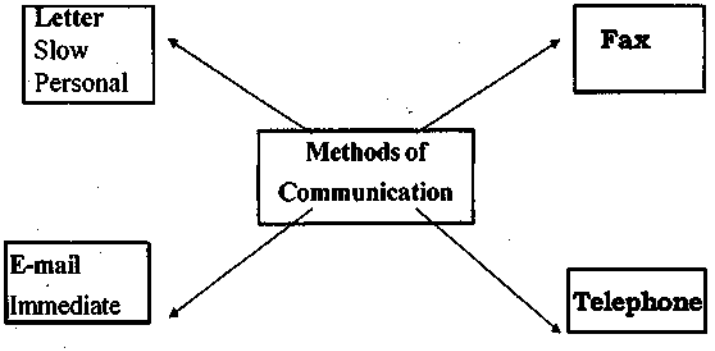
Role of the learner: participant in the teaching-learning situation.

Total time required for the activity: 25 minutes

Description of the activity: (student-student interaction)

The activity involved pair work. As the teacher said, "here is the list of commonly used forms of communication: Letter, E-mail, Fax, and Telephone

When comparing the following methods of communication, what factors would you consider? Work on pairs to extend this mindmap.



Take 15 minutes to do this activity. When you have finished this, take turns to compare and contrast a pair below. Use your mindmap, note and feel free to express your personal preferences. You should aim to speak for 3 minutes.

(1) Letter/telephone

(2) E-mail/fax

(3) Letter/e-mail

(4) E-mail/telephone

Such kind of activities further propel the imagination of the students and they came up with very interesting illustrations of their cultural assimilations.

On the personal front, it was quite challenging for me to carry on with such a way of teaching. It was a patience testing experience because there was not the traditional "pin-drop silence" in the classroom. In fact, there were instances of false starts, lapses and many other interesting anecdotes. But at the end of the teaching session, one signs out with a lot of self-satisfaction because the engagement of the learners in the learning process not only ensures that they are up and active during the teaching-learning situation but also gives them a platform of instant expression of their likes, dislikes and feedback towards the acceptability of the input in terms of content and methodology of teaching. This type of attitude in language teaching can go a very long way in building up meaningful and fruitful classroom situations. The teacher should also try to exploit such an approach towards testing so that the best in the learners comes to the fore. Following factors can be observed for the same. However, testing has other purposes too. Some of these as highlighted by Harris[5] (1969) are:

1. **To determine readiness for instructional programs.** Some screening tests are used to separate those who are prepared for an academic or training program from those who are not. Such selection tests have a single cut off point: examinees either "pass" or "fail" the test, and the degree of success or failure may not be deemed important.

2. **To classify or place individuals in appropriate language classes.** Other screening tests try to distinguish degrees of proficiency so that examinees may be assigned specific sections or activities

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4. Harris, D.P. Testing English as a second language. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1969.

on the basis of their current level of competence. Such tests may make no pass-fail distinctions, since some kind of training is offered to everyone.

3. **To diagnose the individual's specific strengths and weaknesses.** Diagnostic screening tests generally consist of several short but reliable subtests measuring different language skills or components of a single broad skill. On the basis of the individual's performance on each subtest, we can plot a performance profile which will show his/ her relative strength in the various areas tested.

4. **To measure aptitude for learning.** Still another kind of screening test is used to predict future performance. At the time of testing, the examinees may have little or no knowledge of the language to be studied, and the test is employed to assess their potential.

5. **To measure the extent of student achievement of the instructional goals.** Achievement tests are used to indicate group or individual progress towards the instructional objectives of a specific study or training program. Examples are progress tests and final examinations in a course of study.

6. **To evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.** Other achievement tests are used exclusively to assess the degree of success not of the individuals but of the instructional program itself. Such tests are often used in research, when experimental and "control" classes are given the same educational goals but use different materials and techniques to achieve them.

Conclusion: It is assumed that the use of culturally assimilated input brings elements of interest and liveliness in the ESL classroom. This promotes the interactive skills of the learners and enhances their communicative competence. It is also assumed that the preparation of the teaching materials in accordance with the features which are modified with reference and consideration of the students' culture create readiness to learn among the learners, boost their motivation, and increase their comfort level with the teacher and with each other. This will lead to the promotion of language practice and language use within the classroom. Moreover, such an environment will encourage the involvement of the whole class in the classroom tasks and activities. It is further assumed that the timely feedback to the learners will correct their errors in language usage and enforce the earlier input. This will in turn promote natural conversational abilities among the students and help them gain communicative competence.

Annexure - I

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Roll No. :

Address:

Date of Birth:

Schooling:

Classes	Medium of learning (Hindi/English/Punjabi)	Address of the School
1st – 5th		
6th – 10th		
11th – 12th		

Tick the right column in following questions:

1. Which language do you use at following places?

S. No.	Places/Situation	Hindi	English	Punjabi	Any other (Specify)
1.	At home with your family members.				
2.	With your friends/ classmates in the classroom.				
3.	With your teachers in the classroom.				
4.	With your friends/classmates outside the classroom.				
5.	When you go for shopping.				
6.	When you go for sight-seeing/picnic/outing.				
7.	When you go to Banks, Offices, University etc.				
8.	When you meet new people.				
9.	When you go to a hospital or visit a doctor.				

2. Which language do you think you will be required to speak if you go to a new place for higher/professional studies?

(a) Hindi ☐

b) English ☐

(c) Punjabi ☐

(d) Any other, specify ☐

3. Which language will be more helpful when you communicate in the following situations?

S. No.	Situation	Hindi	English	Punjabi	Any other (Specify)
1.	Classroom				
2.	Seminar/ conference				
3.	Discussion with the teacher				
4.	Election speeches				
5.	Public Addressing				
6.	Official/Administrative work				
7.	Talking to the principal				
8.	Traveling by air				
9.	Facing interviews				
10.	Attending parties				
11.	In Canteen				
12.	Shopping				
13.	Meeting new people				
14.	Visiting a doctor				
15.	Social get-together				

4. **How often do you try to speak in English in different situations?**

   (a) Very often ☐

   (b) Sometimes ☐

   (c) Rarely ☐

   (d) Never ☐

5. **Why don't you always speak in English?**

   (a) You think you will stop in between. ☐

   (b) You think you will speak wrong English. ☐

   (c) People will laugh at you. ☐

   (d) Any other, Specify. ☐

6. **How do you try to develop your spoken English?**

   (a) By copying the spoken language of any of your favorite teacher/ friend/ actor /sports star/ leader. ☐

   (b) By listening to news, watching movies, recorded materials (cassettes) etc. ☐

7. **Do you think just copying or listening to materials is sufficient or you require some formal/systematic guidance to speak in English?**

Yes/ No.

8. **How should this guidance be provided?**

   (a) As a part of the undergraduate syllabus. ☐

   (b) Through additional classes during the undergraduate studies. ☐

   (c) As an additional course after completion of undergraduate studies. ☐

9. **How should spoken English be taught?**

   (a) Theoretically, through formal teaching of phonetics and phonology. ☐

   (b) Practically, through a communicative use of English i.e. language in context. ☐

10. **What should be the role of the student in the classroom?**

   (a) Listener. ☐

   (b) Participant. ☐

11. What should be the role of the teacher in the classroom?

(a) Observer ☐

(b) Fellow participant ☐

12. What kind of participation should be there in the classroom?

(a) Teacher and student (dialogue). ☐

(b) Between the student (dialogue/conversations).
o

(c) Teacher and more than one student (conversations/ discussions). ☐

13. What will be the effect of 'teacher as a participant' on the classroom performance of the students?

(a) Encouraging. ☐

(b) Disturbing – causing shyness and withdrawal. ☐

14. What do you think will be the effect of immediate correction by the participant teacher?

(a) Corrective. ☐

(b) Demotivating. ☐

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Nativism: A Cultural Theory and Conceptual Divergence

— Sudeep Kumar

Nativism as an alternative theory of literary criticism gained momentum in India in 1980s and first appeared in a cogent and sustained manner in the writings of Bhalchander Nemade and Ganesh N. Devy. It is quite debatable what exactly Nativism stands for and precisely in what manner it would work once put to literary and critical practice. Much more difficult is to have a consensus definition as the different critics/exponents have come out with their own versions and applications of it. They differ not only in the subject matter of the approach but in the levels of radicalism also. As critical fraternity is not sure about the contours of the approach, it has tried the safe option before it to define the concept in terms of what it is not. Indra Nath Choudhary in his welcome speech at the 'Seminar on Desivad in Indian Literature' in 1995 has come out with his idea of Nativism as:

> Desivad/ Nativism is not an obsession with roots. It is a concept which has come to challenge the very idea of Eurocentric modernism and internationalism – the tendency to compare every literary text / trend with some Euro- American product. Now one realizes that by borrowing things from the West one cannot bring about change and enter the realm of modernity. The elements of modernity are to be sought in our roots and traditions – in our own realities (*Nativism* 2).

But if one is forced to put forward a boiled – down general definition of Nativism, the one by Makarand Paranjape, the editor of the collection of papers presented in the above said seminar, would do the best. "Nativism, then," defines Paranjape, "is a form of indigenism whose agenda can be summed up as a cry for cultural self – respect and autonomy emanating from *bahujan samaj* – the majority of ordinary people who make up the plurality of Indian civilization"(*Nativism* xii). But in the very next line he resorts to the same policy of explaining it in terms of 'what it is not' as: "Nativism, then, is not necessarily a new theory or dogma, nor is it a set of clearly spelt out beliefs or principles. It is rather an attitude, movement or outlook. It is difficult to extract any definite set of evaluative criteria from it, but it helps situate a work of art in such a manner that its cultural affiliations are revealed" (*Nativism* xii-xiii). Thus the base idea of Nativism and Nativistic critical approach lies in situating a literary text in a context – place or location of its birth/ origin – to unearth its cultural allegiances.

Three versions of Nativism:

Turning to Nativist approach, this approach to literature has varied manifestations and as different critics have elaborated and practiced it in their own way; more convenient would be to document these versions critic-wise one by one. In this presentation, we shall have a brief critical sum-up of three important versions of this critical tool working at three different plains followed by an overall critical review.

Radical Nativism: Desivad/ Bhalchander Nemade's Version

Nemade's essay "Sahityateel Desiyata" in Marathi provides the ground from which Nativism grew up into one of the prime concerns in Indian intellectual circles. For him, Desivad can be boiled down to a single line statement as "the assertive expression of one's right to exist as one is." In his purist zeal he goes to the extent of declaring: "Nativism is the only weapon in the hands of the oppressed culture, the weapon which is capable of throwing out the dominant systems of foreign influence which erode capable native system" (*Nativism* 251). The suffocating influence of indiscriminate cultural import from Western world in the field of critical theories has been primarily taken up in his article.

His contribution in the development of this approach can be registered under three heads:

1. Deconstructing the shallow internationalism/ cosmopolitanism in favour of a local flavour, he situates every text and its author in a local context/ cultural space.

2. He creates a delicate difference between Desipana/ nativeness, Desivad/ Nativism and Desiyata/ nativism; and gives them all an umbrella term Nativism for the sake of convenience. "Nativeness," elaborates Nemade, "implies the natural state of sustaining the status quo. Nativism, on the other hand, is the assertive expression of that 'nativism,' the establishment of one's right to exist as one is. Nativism, thus, is a temporary phase of 'nativeness.' However we shall use the term 'nativism' as comprising all these shades of meaning." (*Nativism* 236-37).

3. Native concern in literature, he observes, is not a new phenomenon but the vigour with which it needs to acquire the centre stage is a novel thing.

4. At one place he espouses prohibiting all types of external cultural influences, but later on recapitulates to recognise this paranoid state of affair as transitory in nature. In the meantime, for him,

the indigenous culture shall make its own distinct stamp. Nativism, thus, is a temporary phase of 'nativism.' In other words, he is fully aware of the harms of 'inbreeding' and isolation/ insulation in cultural matters but for the time being, it somehow becomes inevitable to preserve one's native culture.

Ganesh N. Devy's Version: A Cultural Amnesia

With his book *After Amnesia*, it is Ganesh N. Devy who made the concept of Desiyata / Nativity a buzz word in Indian literary circles. This ripple ultimately culminated in the 'Desivad in Literature' seminar of 1995 in Kanpur. As far as his definition of Nativism is concerned, in one of the explanatory-notes of his book, he says: "A school of criticism, designated 'Nativism' has emerged in Marathi literature during last fifteen years. It is led by the novelist – critic Bhalchander Nemade, and has become widely influential. The main emphasis of this school is on evolving the standards of criticism from the native cultural context and on minimizing formalistic 'universal' standards in assessment of fiction" (*After Amnesia* 132). In his book he has tried to provide an in-depth critical understanding of the crisis in the field of literary critical theory in India and tries successfully to connect it with a cultural amnesia about 'bhasa' literary traditions. The problem of critical theory in India, for him, is more of an etymological nature than that of ontological one. And, Devy claims, it cannot be solved unless the 'nature of literary tradition' is understood in the context of our country. Both revivalist (back to the Sanskrit poetics) and westernization (free import of Western theories) tendencies on one hand, and synthesis of East and West in field of critical theory on the other appear to him non-pragmatic and useless. Indian intellectual class to him is a victim of cultural amnesia – that happened because the forces of Colonial soft power and Brahmanism colluded for vested interests. "It may amaze a student of Indian literature," asserts Devy, "that though India had in the past, and continues to have in present, literary traditions in a great many languages, no ancient, medieval or modern Indian language has produced a well developed poetics, with solitary exception of Sanskrit." (*After Amnesia* 61). He concludes that it is not the case that Indian bhasas do not have a critical tradition of their own, but the reality is that they have so in a different kind – other than 'universal' kind of theories. "Trapped between an undiscriminatory revival of the past and an uncritical rejection of it, between Sanskrit poetics and Western critical theory, bhasa criticism," makes Devy clear, "today has ceased to be an intellectual discourse"(*After Amnesia* 10). Solution in this crisis situation, this 'phonocide', for Devy lies in a 'pragmatic literary historiography for bhasa literatures'. We have to seek an answer for

the question as to why a conspicuous shift from Sanskrit to the bhasas as medium of literary creation was not followed by a parallel shift in the field of poetics as well. After the demise of Sanskrit as a living language, the rise of Indian 'bhasas' was a continuation of same literary tradition of India, but with a difference. Bhakti poetry was a challenge posed by the oppressed classes to the Brahmanical monopoly of cultural and spiritual knowledge. The challenge, according to Devy, however did not make a dent in the formal system of knowledge transmission. This literature of protest, therefore, cannot be evaluated by the same hegemonic parameters of Sanskrit poetics or purely imported Western theories. In other words, in search of our 'Shakespeares, Drydens and Fieldings in Bhasa past', we tend to ignore our Tukarams, Ekanaths, Kabirs and Miras. In our intellectual discourse these figures are fashionable no more. To conclude, G. N. Devy's contribution in Nativism can be listed as below:

1. Along with providing solid philosophical foundations to Nativist school, Devy has come out with a much needed example for this approach in the form of *After Amnesia*. The crisis of Indian critical theory, he has established, can be solved through this approach to literary history.

2. He has developed precise terminology for this school of criticism in the form of 'swa'/ 'para', 'desi', 'margi' and 'videshi' to label over various literary traditions. "Para literature would, therefore, include all such activities as are normally considered socially parallel, linguistically parasitical, psychologically paranoid and historically parenthetical. What is common to all forms of para-literature is that they are literatures without interlocutors, taboo to literary history" (*Of Many Heroes* 134). Where 'swa' stands for 'self' / canonized literature; 'para' is not the literary 'other' in Devy. He goes to Indian epistemology and explains it in terms of the difference between the self and the greater self (in the sense of 'distant, far-off and beyond self with its roots not in English term 'pariah' but in Sanskrit one 'param.') Further desi, margi and videshi stand for local / bhasa, national and international literary traditions respectively.

3. The question of 'rift between theory and creative literary tradition,' he has claimed to solve. A systematic answer to as to why theory formulation in 'bhasa' traditions lagged behind to that of creative activity has been provided by him.

4. 'Desivad' in Bhalchander Nemade gives way to 'Desiyata' in Devy's formulation of Indian indigenous critical approach.

5. Perhaps the most important contribution by him lies in bringing Nativism on national front and making it a cultural movement instead of a regional (Marathi) ripple. His struggles against a sort of 'Phonocide' (on the lines of genocide, here national languages are culling their backyard dialects) through establishing a tribal academy is commendable.

Namwar Singh's Version:

Namwar Singh is a figure in Indian critical scene that cannot be delimited in the fault lines of 'isms.' Broadly we enlist him under the rubrics of both nativist / Bhakti criticism and Indian Marxism, but these are not water tight compartments. Keeping in mind the scope of the presentation, I would document his ideas primarily in relation to nativism. In his seminal work *Doosari Parampara Ki Khoj* he brings onboard the ideas of his master Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwevedi to have an alternate tradition to that of the Shukla-parampara in Hindi literature in a forceful manner and makes these more intelligible to the critical fraternity in India. Before that mainstream criticism/ *Shukla-parampara* in Hindi has been a votary of 'high-art' with a polished language, ascetic content matter and high level of collectivism (anti to individualistic element of love) in its literature. In the opening itself, he shows how Acharya Dwevedi deconstructed the notion of 'tradition' in both pre and post Acharya Ram Chander Shukla periods with the example of Kabir, the famous Bhakti poet.

In his sense of '*Doosari Parampara*'/ alternate tradition, Kabir's entry in Hindi literary scene not only brings with it a new way of writing poetry but added a whole new paradigm in critical parameters to judge the existing ones. The Dwivedi-led critical paradigm does not want to disown Tulsidas and Jayasi, given demi-god status in Shukla tradition, but asks for a legitimate space for Kabir and other Saint poets among the canons of Hindi literature. Further Namwar compares these two parallel traditions in Hindi criticism on the basis of the following parameters:

1. Social-ideals of literature
2. *Bhav-bodh*
3. Language and art.

In his celebrated history of Hindi literature, Acharya Ram Chandra Shukla has banished Kabir by labeling him 'a saint but not a poet.' The very charges '*akhhad*' and '*fakkad*' that Acharya Shukla levels against him are used by Acharya Dwevedi and Namwar Singh to his credit in enriching Hindi literary tradition and making it '*lokonmukh paragtiwadi*

parampara' in Hindi. These very traits make his poems a protest against unjust social system. He is made such by the forces of this society only.

Shukla led tradition blames Bhakti poets of relegating critique of political problems to backburner and giving utmost coverage to social problems. Equipped with native contextual knowledge, Acharya Dwevedi explains that the evils of Indian Feudal / Brahmanical social set up were more a pressing problem for these poets than the critique of their contemporary kings sitting in Agra, who were expected to be corrupt otherwise. Thus nativists have turned the table against the margi tradition and its postulates to pronounce literary judgment over Kabir.

Prior to Acharya Dwivedi, Bhakti literature in Hindi used to be considered as reactionary in nature to Muslim attacks and their political subjugation of Indian sub-continent. But it was Acharya Dwevedi and Namwar Singh who challenged it successfully on the grounds that Bhakti poetry must have started from North India and not from South India, which is historically wrong. Without any doubt he accepts the influence of Muslims in Hindi literature but it cannot be called exclusively reactionary as Acharya Shukla termed it earlier. In fact it was British historians who had propagated this line of thinking. Bhakti poetry for him is by genesis *lok-dharmi* in language it uses and its concerns.

The most fundamental contribution of Acharya Dwevedi in the eyes of Namwar Singh lies in the way he destabilizes the notion of a pure Indian culture. Any claim regarding pure Indian culture, however ancient it may be, appears to the latter, a fraud. The moment we say culture enriches itself through cross–fertilizations, we give our acquiescence to the possibility of a pure and native culture which is not possible. Thus the concept of 'tradition/ culture' is purged of its pre and post, and a room for equally good 'alternate tradition' is made by these nativist critics. A sum up of the contribution of Dwevediji and Namwar Singh is given below:

1. They have tried to rework the moribund Shukla-parampara in Hindi literature to accommodate a parallel current 'doosari parampara' inside it. Not only they have challenged it but an alternative is also proposed in the terms of a different conception of social ideals of literature, of art and language.
2. The concepts of 'tradition' and 'pure Indian culture' are deconstructed and destabilized in this parallel approach to Hindi criticism.

3. The strain of 'love' in Bhakti poetry, which was discarded by earlier Hindi theorists is painted as a symbol of protest against the feudal social system of then India.

4. A just and legitimate space is provided to Kabir and other marginalized bhakti poets in parallel to erstwhile favorites Tulsidaas and Jayasi.

5. A systematic analysis is worked out behind the evolution of Bhakti poetry. Its genesis in retaliation to Muslim subjugation of political India is discarded. Bhakti poetry in the form of a genuine 'lokonmukh paragtiwadi parampara' – based on the elements of social protest – is established firmly.

What Nativist critics do:

Naturally it becomes pertinent to ask as to how can one undertake a nativist reading of a literary text or to be more precise as to what would the logical sequence of steps involved in such an exercise. Most of the nativists either have steered clear of this question as the approach is in a nascent stage of development and enlisting at such juncture can be counter-productive; or have done away with such an exercise without explaining how they have done so. As Nativism is an approach and not a 'theory', obviously it is bound to have different connotations in the mind of different people. Even though it may end up in overgeneralization or oversimplification, an attempt has been made here in this paper to distill the essence of different versions in terms of what these people do in a nativist reading:

1. Revisit and challenge the critical parameters established by 'margi'/ mainstream critical texts. The 'one-size-fit-for-all' nationalistic critical and literary discourse constitutes the margi tradition in Devy.

2. While these critics privilege 'desi' strain in literature over 'margi' one, they try to elaborate a literary text through placing it inside its native literary/ critical tradition. And in this process, they save the pluri–identity of our bhasa literatures from turning homogenized.

3. They challenge the notions of 'internationalism/ cosmopolitanism' on one hand and on the other situate a cultural product in a 'native-context'. To put it in another way, a work has to have native elements willingly or unwillingly on the part of the writer.

4. Now these people give privilege to these native cultural – codes while deciphering a text.

5. Namwar Singh led version of nativism talks about revising literary history and puts its stakes behind an alternate / little tradition(s) (*Doosari parampara*) within main-stream literary tradition.

6. A radical model, Desivad, initiated after Bhalchander Nemade's ideology raises an alarm about foreign cultural import. It goes to the extent of labeling 'the English educated upper – classes who find themselves rootless now, but are quite dominant' as the force behind an artificial internationalism. He defines 'desivad' as an assertive expression of one's right to exist as one is. For Nemade it is temporarily radical but a necessary political stance in achieving full nativity/ 'desiyata'.

Problem areas in Nativist critical approach:

1. Nativism in its radical form is quite prone to degenerate into a self – defeating cultural jingoism, chauvinism and narrow minded communalism. Fundamentalists in a plural society, like that of ours, might use it as an excuse for their exclusionary activities.

2. Nativist critics create a matrix of terminology vis. *desi, deshi, desiyata, desipana,* nativeness, nativity and nativism which they themselves are not able to disentangle. Also the literary traditions labeled as *desi, margi and videshi* are not quite exclusive to each other. Whatever may be the level of preciseness, some figures and cross-currents cut across each other.

3. The criterion – that makes a writer or text native – is not specified succinctly by the ideologues. Their oversimplified arguments tend to label everyone writing in bhasas automatically and necessarily as native writers on one hand and 'free and self – aware' on the other. Similarly a practitioner of Indian writings in English, for nativists, becomes 'a part of neo- colonialism.'

4. The ideologues of Nativist approach call it an 'approach' unlike that of a monolithic, rule bound theory of western world, which in turn is flexible enough to accommodate all bhasa– literatures and cultural products of plural India. All such gimmick apart, none of them unfolds the logical steps involved in such critical practice.

5. What would be the measuring rod for nativism in a piece of literature? Palshikar has been quoted by Makarand Paranjape, "local / regional setting" and "rural and primitive" or even the use of local dialects in the narrative are not the only characteristics of nativism. In India, both the Great and the Little traditions are native. Even the Anglo – Indians have by now their native traditions and culture."

6. Nativist approach tends to over-simplify when it assumes native traditions as pure and having a precise start off point. In Bhasa traditions also, we have a set of writers that defy their placement in either of single tradition. Yashpal and Krishna Sobti, for instance, write in Hindi but the political space they talk about is both East and West Punjab. Similarly Mulk Raj Anand belongs to Indian Writings in English but the language he writes with relates him to Punjabi tradition.

Conclusion:

Nativism as a cultural theory of criticism has yet to ossify into a concrete critical tool. Desivad for some of its propounders, desiyata for others – it still falls short of developing critical terminology of its own. Despite these handicaps, Nativism has the capacity to cater to the cultural products of multi-cultural, multi-linguist and multi-ethnic space called India. No other contemporary theory but Nativism can explain the cultural amnesia and the rise of Bhakti poetry in Indian literary history in such a scientific manner. Its conceptual divergence helps it to accommodate various cultural products under the rubric of literature and thus making Indian literature more inclusive and 'representative' in character.

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Post-Ambedkarite Critique of Anna Hazari's *Indian Outcaste* — First Dalit Autobiography in English

— Amandeep

Hazari's *Indian Outcaste* is the first autobiography of an untouchable in English written way back in 1951 – a time when writing autobiography was the sole preserve of the nationalist elite[1]. Very significantly it is not translated into any regional language. Immediately after Independence, the nationalist elite in order to project its contribution to India's struggle against the British, literally indulged in writing autobiographical literature in a very conscious and conspicuous manner. The emphasis was to overstate and indeed spiritualize its role in the heroic struggle. Hazari, an unknown subaltern subject, ventured to write his autobiography at a juncture when the national elite was perceived by the general pubic as unquestionably the authentic representative of the new post-Independent India. In the din of nationalist euphoria, the subaltern discourse was hardly audible. There was no official patronage to literature written by the non-elite. Hazari's autobiography was at best a cry in the wilderness, yet it needs a reappraisal in the context of emerging contours of dalit backlash. The autobiography gives a vivid account of the writer's struggle under or within rigid Hindu stratifications and more importantly his relative ease with British way of life.

It is not that Hazari wrote his life-story without any inspiration to do so. There was at least one favorable factor that must have propelled Hazari, and that was the discourse of Ambedkar which had gained sufficient currency in the political parleys at least among the dalits. By 1950s Ambedkar in his own measured constitutionalist manner had raised issues of caste-discrimination. For any literate dalit, he had prepared fertile ground for self-expression even if it entailed backlash from the upper elite. Without Ambedkar's powerful presence in the political arena, Hazari's autobiography could not have even taken off. Even Gandhian discourse of the *harijan* had proved to be a conducive factor for persons like Hazari to write about themselves[2]. Other caste-movements particularly in South India around 1950s had also generated awareness about the plight of lower-castes. The political discourse around 1950s was not unilaterally nationalist, and from the margins, the voice of dissent had already made some headway. Hazari's enterprise is as much informed by the contemporary political discourse, as it informs them.

Hazari's autobiography draws our attention as the first major autobiography of an untouchable. This is the story of the struggles of a deeply sensitive and ambitious person belonging to the lowest stratum of the Indian society. More than his struggles, the story is more about Hazari being fortunate enough to serve directly the British as their servant. Luckily he was engaged by one English family after another as a servant. From them he received kind treatment which he would never dream of getting from an Indian: "... an Indian would give one anna and think he was giving a fortune, the Anglo- Indian two annas and think it sheer robbery, while the British tommy would give four annas and still think he had not given enough..."(114). The distinctions made by the writer are very subtle and specific and speak a lot about his discernible wisdom. The servants, the eternal receivers of masters' alms have their own yardsticks to measure their sagacity in terms of the tips they receive from them.

The remarkable feature of Hazari's autobiography is that it is written in English which itself is very rare when it comes to dalit autobiography. Dalit autobiographies which have swelled in number after 70's onwards have been written primarily in local language namely Marathi, Gujrati, Tamil, Punjabi, etc. and then translated into English. The issue of language is very critical towards any meaningful understanding the role of dalit literature as a whole. Can dalit express himself through English? Knowledge of English itself was a kind of empowerment at a time when English-speaking Indians were few in number. English was clearly the language of the elite. Hazari's autobiography therefore offers a curious and rather intriguing paradox — it is an autobiography of a non-elite subaltern in elite medium. He uses English like a master. English syntax and structure is modified and broken by him to suit his purpose. Only the words are English, their organization is Indian and totally his own.

English as a medium of dalit autobiography plays its own role. It does not let the autobiographical expression turn abusive or unparliamentary. It engenders a measure of sophistication in articulation. It should be kept in mind that by 1950s when the British English ruled the roost, recent postcolonial devices of linguistic subversion had not developed. English as a language was of course undergoing some kind of self-attrition in the hands of writers like Joyce, Beckett and Osborne; it had taken on quite a naturalistic turn, but the anger and pain it expressed was still stifled. It was inadequate to express the native backlash. Hazari's English autobiography is thus caught in a bind — if on the one hand it could finds access among the English-speaking international audience, on the other it could not express with as much

rigour and authenticity the pain and anger of his fellow caste-members as latter-day Marathi autobiographies do. Poverty, hunger, starvation, homelessness and economic exploitation, sexual abuse, physical torture is absent in Hazari autobiography. Even the rhetoric of identity assertion is absent. The status of his being born into a low-caste is stated rather mildly in terms of being 'wrong' or 'wronged': After meeting with Joseph in Europe, Hazari realizes that "Everything about me was wrong — my home was wrong, my clothes were wrong. I was born in the wrong family and I could not see how I could overcome the difficulties inherent in my parenthood, the community, and the karma"(72). In this paper an effort would be made to highlight the assimilationist as well as escapist aspects of early dalit autobiography through Hazari's narrative.

Born in Hasanpur, India after World War I in an untouchable caste, the author tells the story of his boyhood of village life and customs, wedding ceremonies and funerals. We get a vivid picture of the customs and traditions of the people graphically described. In the summer he was fortunate to become a trusted servant of various British homes who provided Hazari with a tutor. Thus with an education, he was able to improve his place in the world. Written against/ in the backdrop of Gandhism and Ambedkarism, Hazari's autobiography obviously lacks the radicalism of post-1970s dalit politics. In his "Foreword" to the autobiography H.S.L. Polak mentions about the rather moderate nature of Hazari's self-expression: "Nevertheless, the story, told with so much restraint and moderation, so little bitterness and hostility, is a sad and yet a true one" (7). 'Control' continues to be the cardinal principle of expression.

Hazari's autobiography works very much within the rubric of Ambedkarite ideology of dalit emancipation[3]. It is written in the "Foreword" to his autobiography that "May the rapid and honorable implementation of the appropriate provisions of the constitution of the new India speed up those opportunities"(not paginated). This truly depicts or reflects Ambedkar aesthetics[4]. There is not even a hint of a militant armed struggle. The impact of *karma*-centric Gandhism also seems to rein in Hazari's anger. Once again Polak mentions about Hazari's abiding faith in the law of *karma*: "The author [Hazari] seems to have learnt the true lesson of *Karma* — that its to be used for the constructive and not destructive purposes, that it should be rooted in hope and not in despair, so that it may become the foundation of better *Karma* for the individual and the community and so provide still greater opportunities of self-less service"(7). *Karma* as a theory of life continues to figure time and again in the autobiography. More than the assertion of an individual self, the narrator is lost in defining the role of *karma* in the making of his self.

Polak's observation is patently Gandhian and it in a way indicates about the 'constructive' and therefore 'conciliatory' nature of Hazari's venture[5]. The prefatory remarks of Polak present a fair idea about the tenor of dalit politics in 1950s. Working within the basic principles of Hinduism it had to remain peaceful and constructive. The apple-cart of Hinduism is not terribly shaken. The autobiography in terms of its tone and tenor remains very 'parliamentary' and 'reflective'. There is hardly any activist urge or agenda – something which becomes pronounced in latter-day dalit writing as a whole. One wonders that how Hazari could sustain his narrative without the necessary activist urge. Hitherto autobiography is the narrative of the doer, of the activist. Hazari's autobiography has no such claims to activism, collective or personal.

One of the main features of Hazari's aesthetics is that it tends to be assimilative, as it does not threaten to unsettle the basic paradigms of Hinduism. The assimilative aesthetics is not entirely uncritical or unilaterally accommodative; it does allow criticism of the mainstream, but within the limits set by the mainstream itself. In other words assimilative aesthetics ensures no radical departure from the classical values of decency and decorum. In Hazari's autobiography Hinduism remains uncontested at least on the level of philosophy; rather it is used to 'justify' some of the actions that Hazari or his parents do. For instance, while referring to his father's second marriage, Hazari takes recourse to orthodox Hinduism thus: "It is quite normal for an Indian to have more than one wife living under the same roof, of course behind his [Hazari's father] action lay the idea of *karma* – the salvation of Hindu religion for every Hindu must have a male child to leave in this world. Although the untouchables are separate as a caste of there own they have the same ethical ideals as the four main caste of Hindu"(9).

The law of *karma* is an inclusive term; it can be interpreted as an embodiment of God's will, the promoter of disinterested action and confirmation of previous births. From the viewpoint of the upper castes, the notions of *dharma* and *karma* are important for maintaining the system. The untouchables also follow similar rituals. The untouchables act in accordance with the system not because they subscribe to it but because they are forced to act. In later autobiographies, dalit writers tend to break free from the patently Hindu theories of *karma*. The grip of the *karma* theory started to loosen with the change in the economic and political structures and spread of liberal values during the British period. Hazari believes rather uncritically that it is very "normal" to have second wife; it suggests the extent to which mainstream Hindu thinking has gone into the minds of the dalits in general. Deep down the ethics of canonical Hinduism determine the social conduct of dalits,

and it is with great political will that they gather the courage to challenge them. It needs to be observed here that dalits lost their distinct cultural values once they fell into the trap of sanskritization. According to M.N.Srinivas [2], the urge to have a male-child, and marrying second time while the first wife is alive, marrying the daughter with dowry, etc. are some of the ills which dalits have taken from the Brahminical order; otherwise dalits during pre-sanskritization were quite progressive and modern-minded[6].

In Hazari's autobiography there is some kind of cultural consensus from top to bottom as the untouchables rather tacitly share the principles of purity and pollution of caste Hindus. Instead of highlighting departures from Hindu way of life, Hazari seems to bring similarities to the fore: "Our Gods and goddesses are same as the gods and goddesses of the high caste Hindus the only difference being that we have their images amongst our community. Our offering to them of sweetmeats, grains, flowers and blood sacrifices are the same"(19). Such admissions only suggest the appropriation of the dalits into the Hindu order at least at the level of divinity and religious worshipping. One of the greater challenges that dalits of modern India face is to invent their own pantheon of gods or goddesses. As long as gods remain same or common, there is very little possibility of subaltern assertion. Hazari's autobiography does not suggest any breakthrough at the level of forging a distinct set or pantheon of gods.

Hazari has the belief that every Hindu must have a male child to carry forward the family- tree etc. In the same way he explains the custom of child marriage and he writes: "In Hindu way we have three ceremonies: first the engagement, which takes place at any time during childhood; then the marriage, and then the actual ceremony of bringing the bride home, which is so important socially, but very quite affair which concerns the two families only"(50). Hindu holy books seem to attract the young Hazari. Influenced by Hindu epics like *Ramayana* and *Gita*, and working under European officers, the author seems to be fairly sanskritized and anglicized, both: "With a book like the *Ramayana*, in my hands I could always satisfy the ordinary man. The *Ramayana* is of great value to all caste of Hindus, as it deals not only with the spiritual problems of a king and his country his wife and family but gives to each caste and reed its place in the complete Hindu ethical system"(63). At a later stage in his life, Hazari does become aware of the cultural politics of *Ramayana* and he begins to question its realism: "But the *Ramayana* has lost its significance when he saw cruel condition of his community. In the evenings, as I sat reading the *Ramayana* to my family and friends I felt I was helping them to remain as they had

been for centuries bound by the chains of *karma*, and I was uneasy at the thought. To me the book seemed to be far removed from reality except as a national legend or a fairy tale, it had lost its significance" (97).

The fact that he dares to term *Ramayana* as 'fairy tale' speaks of growing disenchantment towards this mega-narrative of Indian culture. The holy text is approached with lot of critical concern, and the endeavour is to liberate himself as well as his fellow dalits from the illusory grip of the religious tale. The *Ramayana*, a text which is revered by the caste Hindus for its liberating potential, makes the writer "uneasy". It is such observations that in a very tentative and unconscious way lay the foundation of counter-aesthetics or counter-historiography. Despite being skeptic about the authenticity of *Ramayana*, Hazari, unlike his latter-day post-Ambedkar dalit activists, does not go to the extent of burning the holy book in public in protest. He leaves the discussion rather open-ended by dubbing the holy text as either a national legend or a fairy tale which has lost significance over a period. The fact that he concedes *Ramayana* the status of "a national legend", itself puts rider on his protest-dynamics. Criticizing *Ramayana*, and yet acknowledging it as a 'national legend' fits well in the assimilative frame of the autobiography. The autobiography stops short of verbal violence, and the criticism of *Ramayana* is too mild from the standards of Pantherites[7].

The persistent faith of Hazari in the law of *karma* compiled with fatalism also dims the contestatory prospects of his life-writing. The karma theory disparages human potentiality to be self-determining creature. For this reason, life was thought of as an illusion. The canonical explanation of *karma* is: "The law of karma is an inclusive term. It can be interpreted as an embodiment of god will, the promoter of disinterested action and confirmation of previous births The law of karma, being an impersonal force, makes action possible without an agent and transmigration without a transmigrating soul"(82). Clearly the doctrine of *karma* pulls back the rebel protagonist into the vicious cycle of life and death. Karma as a principle is so over-arching that any attempt even to imagine a distinct separatist space is belied immediately. Hazari's is very much a captive of karma-theory, it is this mental block that holds his rebellious persona from violent break.

Even as Hazari asserts the separate character of his people, he is aware of the unfair Hindu past he carries through the generations. He mentions how his grandmother told the stories from the *Ramayan* and the *Gita*, emphasizing that "we untouchables were part of Hindu

community, and that in the ages past we had been honoured by the incarnate Hindu gods by their eating from our hands" (32). Later on Hazari discovered that it was on the basis of these so-called scriptures that dalits were given the status of low-caste: "I found that in most of the Hindu folk tales, untouchables play their part; these tales are much quoted among our class to justify our existence and to give us morale, and to show how, ethically, we should be content with our life. Of course my grandmother believed everything written in the Hindu scriptures, and so did all the untouchables and the low caste Hindus at that time, on this belief hangs the whole fabric of the Hindu caste system"(32). Instead of larger and well-institutionalized Hinduism, what disseminates most are its tales which circulate at all levels of culture – low or high – as mini-narratives of hoary wisdom. The scriptural tales have invaded the inner most recesses of mind, and dalit mind, howsoever, guarded he or she may be, cannot remain immune from their over-reach. The role that untouchables play in these stories is hardly ever contested even while they are told to them. Even dalit grandmothers internalize these caste-tales without critical engagement. Though Hazari distances himself from the times of his grandparents, yet deep down, he is fatalistic like caste-Hindus and does not evince Dalitist faith in material production. The quote below points towards the hold of fatalist thinking on the protagonist thus:

> We just lived on hope of – spring, hope of work; our philosophy of life was that God had created us and that .He would provide for our need according to His will. Our fortunes good or bad were the will God and we were always taught to think our lot better than that of most people. With that outlook on life it did not much matter what happened to any of us; it was our *Karma*. So long as we had bread and work, there was nothing in world of any consequence to us (56).

The above comments of the autobiographer reveal the extent to which Hinduism at a fundamental level had appropriated the dalit mind.

Even Hazari persuades his father to get whatever Hindu literature was published in Urdu and he read the *Ramayana* and *The Legends of Prithvi Raj*. He despite his reservations on *Ramayana*, goes on to give importance to the great mythological text thus: "The Ramayana is of great value to all castes of Hindus, as it deals not only with the spiritual problems of a King and his country, his wife and family, but gives to each caste and creed its place in the complete Hindu ethical system."(63). The patently casteist text thus escapes the critical wrath of a dalit writer. Dalit writer of the post-70s specially target *the Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* for a rather uncharitable depiction of low-caste

characters like Bhilni, Shambuk, Eklavya, Karan, Tadaka etc. Hazari's mild resistance to the injustices of portrayal of low-caste characters in the sacred texts is understandable in the sense that till 1950s, dalit awareness had not reached the level of confidence which it has reached today.

At another place in the autobiography, Hazari mentions as to how the socialization process of Dalits was very much coordinated and governed by the general Hindu values. The mother of the protagonist used to tell him the stories of *Ramayana* and other Hindu texts in which untouchability was portrayed as an acceptable part of Hindu way of life. For long the protagonist, very much like her grandmother, believed in the truthfulness of patently Hindu tales. Only as he grows, he begins to realize the politics of caste: "In my case these tales used to set my childish head working and wanting to know more" (32). He does mention that how in his mind ideas from fairy tales and the bondage of the Hindu karma remain constantly in strange conflict.

Hazari is enamored of Hindu metaphysics and its principle of *karma* in particular. Hazari always seeks to have Hindu way of life. He writes: "How many times I wished that my father was a Mohammadean or a high caste Hindu, and that people would look up to him instead of looking down to him. However friendly we might be with other servants, we could never mingle with them in the religious essentials of life"(61). Such lines reveal the pressures of sanskritization which dalits seem to undergo in the wake of the politics of reformation. Unlike the militant dalit activists of 70s, Hazari seeks upward social mobility through mingling with the upper-caste Hindus. The very desire smacks of a latent willingness for appropriation into the higher order.

The response of the autobiographer towards Hinduism therefore is quite indecisive. And this tentativeness stems from the difficult times he passes through. On the one hand, Ambedkar had already bequeathed a sense of unease with the mainstream Hinduism and proximity to colonial masters had also given him a sense of modern secular polity. On the other, there were the pressures of consolidating the new nation, which in its unofficial unconscious rhetoric was always a 'Hindustan'. Nation had to be strengthened, yet a path of 'separatist' emancipation suggested by Ambedkar too had to be traversed. Consequently, the ethical values of Hinduism, its representation of the dalits, its caste-politics, etc. have been criticized in the autobiographical account, but its philosophy seems to have a general acceptability. It is due to this ambivalence Hazari's endeavour at best trudges along a very moderate path of dalit protest. Latter dalit writings demolish Hinduism at every level – philosophic, ethical, cultural. Even protagonist is not free from

the impact of untouchability he writes: "Though in my community I was treated with great respect, when I went into shopping center of the town I was still the same Untouchable who must give way to those of higher caste. The shopkeeper still threw the goods I bought, either into my basket or the piece of cloth, which I might carry for that purpose"(63). The passages that deal with the philosophy of Hinduism evince a different aesthetics than those that deal with Hindu sociology. Early dalit writings do not question Hindu metaphysics as much as they question its sociology and ethics. Bhakti protest, for instance, was more against rituals than against metaphysics.

Hazari's autobiography is horizontal in terms of its special dimensions as it does not give us first hand images of dalit interiors, the writer speaks more about the experience of dalits with the Europeans or British. At a number of places in the autobiography, Hazari brings into sharp focus the impact of British on the making of his liberal self. When writer worked in Tennis club in Simla under English people, he explains: "All this work was with English people and there was no question of caste or reed. I felt free and independent happy in the knowledge that I was a useful member of the family and my main interest at this time was to work and keep my job"(54). At so many places, overlooking the colonial component British imperialism, Hazari does discover solace in the liberal values of English culture:

> The English lady took a great liking to my mother; she employed her as a second maid to look after the children, and talk her duties of children, nurse. I must have been very happy too, as they children were quite young and my mother was allowed to take me to play with them. All the other servants were highest caste Hindu's and Muslim's, But we all lived in the same compound like one family. This lady on her departure gave my mother quite a good testimonial so that she could apply for a job elsewhere if she wishes to do so (23).

Hazari's autobiography can serve as a critical rejoinder to those who grudge against the willing conversion of dalits to Christianity or Islam. The fact that he enjoys a sense of inclusiveness, even while working as a servant of an English lady, suggests only the extent to which rigid Hindu order distanced him from society. In the house of an English lady, there may be economic hierarchies, and even that of the colonial and the colonized, but there were no such hierarchies among the Hindu and Muslim servants, low and upper-caste maids. No wonder, Hazari has unqualified praise for the liberal-minded British, While serving as a waiter in a coffee-house at Simla, he with his uncanny sensibility of an intelligent servant would recount caste/ethnic differences among

his customers: "It was striking to note that an Indian would give one anna and think he was giving a fortune, the Anglo-Indian two annas and think it sheer robbery while the British Tommy would give four annas and still think he had not given enough at bearer (114).

Hazari dwells a great deal on the duplicity of pure Hindu way of life. As a waiter of a coffee-house he has seen the immoralities that Hindus, Muslims and Anglo-Indians indulge in behind the walls, in their private huddles: "Within a short time, I knew my customers. I knew the Mohammedans who came to drink and eat pastries made with lard, and I knew also the Hindus who relished a cold beef sandwich with their drink. I knew the foolish young Indians who came to wait with women of doubtful character, and the tommies who brought their Anglo-Indian sweethearts . . ."(114). Coffee-house as a site gives Hazari an access to know different communities first hand. Different communities act and behave contrary to what their religion prescribes. As a marginalized subject, Hazari spares neither Hindus, nor Muslims, nor even Anglo-Indians. These three communities were so monolithic that each one pushed low-caste people like Hazari into margins all the more.

The strength of Hazari's autobiography lies in its international setting, its cross-civilizational framework. And precisely for this reason, the narrator spends very little time in describing the inner life of dalit *bastis*. The autobiographies of the post-Ambedkarites provide us graphic description of the inner dalit landscape[8]. But at places he does peep inside his own dalit interiors, and provides intimate details of everyday dalit thrills:

> We dragged the bodies of dead dogs onto an open space, so that the vultures could make a speedy end of their remains. After that we tied the four feet of pig with a cord and passed a stout stick between; three of us taking each end of the stick on our shoulder. It weight quite one hundred and fifty pounds, if not more... after a long rest we brought the kill home. Everyone was thrilled, as a pig of that size had not been killed for a very long time. Soon it was cut up and divided amongst the community" (99).

It is in such passages that Hazari in a way sets an aesthetic frame for the future dalit writing. The dead dogs and the hunted pigs animate the dalit landscape, and lend it a touch of what may be termed as ultra-realism. In the mainstream literature, such descriptions are normally avoided for they may affront the aesthetics of the sophisticated. The bestial, the brutal and the downright dalit seem to overturn standard measures of aesthetics. The animals, dead or alive,

are the natural companions of dalit. The intimate and robust relationship of dalits with the animals lends an unprecedented dynamism to dalit landscape. As an autobiographer, Hazari does not shy away from providing his readers an account of the everyday thrills of dalit life.

But even as Hazari takes us to the interiors of dalit ghettos, he is bogged down by the feelings of a low-caste subject, who is forced to do the menial job:

> Our livelihood came from the work we did in the town, cleaning the market, disposing of the dead animals... as regards the dead animals, we watched in the same way as the vultures' watches, because there is no difference between the vulture and the sweeper in this respect. As soon as an animal such as cow, horse or goat died we brought it to field to skin it. We took the meat for cooking and eating, and the skin we dry to be sold. We left the carcass for the vultures to clean, and when the vultures had finished we collected the bones, which we sold" (12).

In latter-day dalit writings, there is a joyful acceptance of so-called low-life. In fact it is not seen as low-life, it is seen as distinct life, with its own special aesthetics and value-system. Vulture is not necessarily a symbol of evil life that harps on the flesh of the dead. One reason of relatively less focus on inner dalit landscape could be the narrator own lack of confidence in the ways of life his community lives by. Limbale's strength, by way of contradistinction, lies in zooming on the interiors of dalit household/ locality. Also the complex of performing menial job is very carefully and strategically put on hold in modern dalit writings. Once the menial nature of the job is accepted, the menial social status of the caste doing such jobs is reinforced.

In Hazari's autobiography there is no loud or assertive articulation of any kind of identity, national, regional or castist; rather there is an element of evasion and escape. When Hazari worked under the English in Simla, the other servants took on the interest in politics but he says: "I could not make up my mind which side to take whether to fight for the freedom of India or to fight for the freedom of untouchable from the degradation of the caste system"(77).

The indecisiveness which Hazari experienced was the predicament of practically every dalit during the freedom movement. On the one hand there was the evil of imperialism, on the other there was the bane of caste-discrimination. Fighting for the latter, entailed weakening the fight against the might of the Empire. Ambedkar was restrained by Gandhi on the same ground, of uniting for a larger cause, and postponing the cause of his community till India gets freedom.

At times political debates on untouchables, their entry into temples, and violence and aggression of the colonial masters on the poor armless natives do disturb Hazari, but he is always reluctant to join any bandwagon:

> The Congress and Muslim League's daily papers clamored for equality of all castes and the absorbing of the untouchables into society. There were articles too about opening the Temples of the Brahmins to the untouchables and the achieving of a brotherhood of all men. But all this meant nothing to me, even the probability of the opening of the Temples, as I knew that if they succeed in opening them the high castes would erect new Temples of their own.

There is cynicism and lack of will both. Hazari's indifference does not stem as much from ignorance, as from his own capacity to rebel beyond a point. Clearly Hazari has no pretensions of being a visionary of the stature of Ambedkar. The very tone of resignation precludes such a possibility. What lends, an enormous human touch to the autobiography is Hazari's ordinariness, his skepticism and his indecisiveness. He could not imagine that dalits actually can, one day, force their way to the temples. The nationalist rhetoric of reform does reach to him, but he is not seduced by it.

The Jallianwala massacre does stir Hazari, but the inertia or the indifference is too much. He feels the pain but does not let it overpower him. He refuses to join the battle against the Raj even though he is convinced of its absolute injustice. The following admission reveals Hazari's steadfast distance from the mainstream politics:

> At that moment these questions did not seem to have great importance, but what did stab my mind and feelings with great force was the mass shooting of men, women and children at Jallianwalla Bagh by order of General Dyer in 1919. I felt the slaughter of innocent women and children could not be justified; but this did not make me wear the Gandhian Cap, which many were wearing at that time (78).

The reluctance to join freedom struggle led by Gandhi on the part of Hazari could partly be understood in terms of general dalit skepticism about the overtly Hindu ways of his politics.

Instead of playing a positive instrumental role in social change, Hazari chooses the relatively secure and less challenging path of conversion for his upward social mobilization. Towards the end of the autobiography, Hazari converts to Islam. Till 1950s conversion to other

religions was heralded as a possible way out to obviate the excesses of caste-hierarchy. Conversion and assimilative aesthetics go together in the sense that the possibilities of radical rupturing go a begging in both the cases. Conversion is a kind of escape-mechanism, which dalit activists of post-Amberkarite phase strongly resent. Conversion therefore leads ultimately to the acceptance by a group of a new social structure of power not residing with the community, but placed in the hands of a small ruling class.

Very much like Ambedkar, Hazari discovers conversion to another religion as a possible way out of dalit social mobilization. But unlike Ambedkar, his conversion is rather spasmodic; there are no sustained bouts of conflict. While Ambedkar, before he converted to Buddhism, confronted life, politics and society rather rigorously, Hazari's exposure to the complexities of life is rather limited. He is driven towards Islam on the basis of some books he happens to read on comparative religion:

> The books I read in Urdu was largely comparative studies of religion from the Islamic point of view, and novels translated from European languages or from Persian and Arabic, having an Islamic background, I would not have found it so easy to mix and know these people if I had not known parts of the Koran and background of Mohammedan knowledge, which I had acquired in Shimla. The hospitality and brotherly attitude of the Mohammedans made a very deep impression upon me. (128-29)

Hazari converts not because of overwhelming philosophic dilemmas; the reasons are purely sociological. The presumably caste-less and non-sectarian character of Islam attracts him, and the non-iconic character of the divine also enamours him:

> I began to ask myself why should I not become a Mohammedan and be a part of great brotherhood of Islam, where there is no bar to cast or colour. In this religion there are no idols and only one God. By its laws too one man can have four wives and divorce is permitted for any cause and any time or at any age. And what could one wish for better than the beautiful picture of Islamic heaven with multitude of young female angles serving the faithful, and dispensation lay down for every sin on earth (141).

Apparently more than the spiritual or theological imperatives, it is the sociological imperatives of Islam that trigger of conversion in the protagonist. Conversion from Hinduism to Muslim was aimed at providing a new identity, a new image as that of a self- willed, self-

propelled and dignified individual with the capacity to enjoy his basic rights. What lends an element of promiscuity and voluptuousness to Hazari's idea of conversion is the promise of Islamic heaven with multitude of young females.

But the conversion is not entirely un-problematic. First of all some of the tenets of Islam remain unacceptable to Hazari. One such tenet, as he writes, is: "Yet there was something which did not fit into my ideal view of a religion either or hereafter, and that was the everlasting Hell fire for are all unbelievers" (141). Second, after conversion, there is hardly any spiritual change in Hazari. The autobiography in this sense becomes a self-reflexive enterprise. Everything that the protagonist does to redeem his dalit lot is held to scrutiny in the same go. In the following passage, the protagonist brings out the limited benefits of conversion thus:

> My conversion did not cause any spiritual change within myself, but the difference it made to me in the world outside, not only in Aligarh, but wherever I went afterwards, was like coming into the day light from the darkness. Every door was now opened to me and for the next few moths I became not only a part of the Muslim community but a part of Aligarh itself. My friendships, which had previously been limited to a few young men of the university and the city, were now extended to the families of my friends. So much so that even offers of marriage from the lower middle class began to appear on the horizon, which further convinced me that I had truly become one of them . . .. (142).

Later dalit writings bring out that even at the level of sociology; conversion did not help the dalit cause as much. Conversion only created new social categories such as 'Dalit Muslims' or 'Dalit Christians'. Instead of un-doing the caste, conversions brought about caste in non-castist religions like Islam and Christianity. Islam provides an alternative for emancipation. For Hazari, economic and ideological reasons have been the main motive force for conversion. May be it was a desperate move to escape from the suffocating local milieu and the clutches of the dominant classes and to breathe fresh air by becoming different but conversion to Islam has so far been localized and has not emerged in the form of a movement. Perhaps Hazari believed in Ambedkar ideology that there is no salvation for the untouchable so long as they remained in the Hindu fold.

In his treatment of the issue of conversion, Hazari shows his analytical skills. There is no rhetoric or passionate outburst. Rather there is self-conflict: "The religious conflict became stronger and

stronger — I had to think hard when I really wanted to do. Did my life lie in the pursuit of education, or in change of religion? I realize that education without religion meant nothing to me; my studies must be related to my spiritual life it seem I brotherhood and not a merely formal system"(141-42). He finds himself a victim of racial and religious prejudice, even after conversion. He writes with a sense of disbelief: "A Mohammedan can never go to hell no matter how black his sins might be, as there is a dispensation for every kind of sin. Conversely those who do not believe in Mohammed as the prophet can never go to heaven under any circumstances. Heaven is a place reserved for the believers of Islam only"(130).

Despite converting to Islam, Hazari is not utterly oblivious of the shortcomings of Islam. The intolerance towards the believers of other religions is something, which Hazari could not digest, in Islamic theology. Hazari could not adjust himself in Lucknow. He argues: "In spite of all my new friendship, and associations, I still felt that I could never have a real part in the life of Lucknow. There was something, which I could never get rid of – the fact that I was born as untouchable. At times this kept me away from the more exclusive society, as I could never discuss either my family or childhood.(148) There is a growing realization about the inadequacies of the politics of conversion. At best it is an outer way to negotiate social exclusion, deep down; it does not work, as the sense of alienation continues:

> I could never say to a friend that when I was young I did this and that I could not tell anyone why and how I was receiving an allowance from an Englishman. I tried to live as they did; yet I had not background and no social rock on which to stand. I confided in no one, since I dreaded either sympathy or condescension, with the result that in the midst of all these friends I was a lonely and home sick. (148)

Conversion, if one were to believe Hazari's first-person narrative, leads to greater alienation. It alienates one from his original community, and it never translates into belongingness into the community to which one converts.

Hazari converts to Islam, which despite its promise of casteless-ness fails to comfort him. Islam demands devoutness of highest degree, which the protagonist finds difficult to come by. As a converted Muslim, he does not have any foregrounding in Islamic practices, theology and way of life. There is an after-thought after conversion: "Although I belonged to Islam, I could never bring myself in my prayers to thank God because I had a part in the Community which he had saved, and

was not one of the millions whom he had condemned eternally. Later, as I discussed religion with other Mohammedans and came to know more about the life and teachings of Mohammed, I became still more convinced that I could never be a devout and orthodox disciple of Islam, and this knowledge only increased a consciousness of guilt from which there seemed no escape (149). Like Hazari when Dr. Ambedkar moved for religious conversion, his appeal did not attract a large section of the untouchables. Not because they believed in the Karma theory of Hinduism or did not wish to improve their condition, but because they did not want to get uprooted by conversion.

Since Hazari's autobiography does not have a revolutionary fervour, it does not offer us instances of rarefied poetic flavor or inspired expressions. The life-story is re-counted in a matter-of-fact tone, with more emphasis on the descriptive details of the protagonist's journey from a dalit ghetto to Paris. Most of the times, the journey of the self is narrated in bare terms, sans any linguistic camouflage or artistic deviance. At times, Hazari does become self-reflexive and undergoes moments of conflict, but overall, the tenor remains that of pure description. In some chapters, towards the end he does tend to imitate the poetic sublime of mainstream autobiographies. This is how he concludes his first chapter: "To a child if there are even a few apples on a tree it will appears as through the tree is covered with fruit and my imagination was moved by nature as windy as that of any other child in the world" (25). Nature is ground zero of civilization. For a victim of man-made civilization, nature, with all its lawlessness, is the preferred terrain of co-existence It looks that Hazari's mind is always in search of peace in the lap of nature, as he writes: "I enjoyed the snow and the clear skies when I could gaze upon the distant peaks and watch the little snow birds of so many walks during the snow falls, and these things were more to me than all the promises of fall India yet I was never at peace within myself"(77).

Nature – undivided into cartographies of castes and nations – does fancy the protagonist and he seeks to merge into its expanse. Nature, despite it awesome powers to engulf the small man, is the chosen zone of emancipation. In the passage quoted below the term "wide horizon" is very significant as it points towards the zest for the exceeding the given social self:

> The sea was rough, the boat was small, and I had never sailed before. Already I felt that I was part of a new world, encircled by the mighty ocean which knew no creed or caste, and as I gazed towards the wide horizon, I prayed that one day I might find that peace of soul which I had never known but always sought (151).

The "encircled ocean" is boundless to the ordinary human eye. Later dalit writing, seething with anger as it is, fails to take note of the unbridled nature as much. Nature becalms the bruised psyche of the caste-victim. But such lapses into the non-sectarian nature are rare and incidental, as the endeavour constantly is to seek other means of social emancipation. Nature is not a playground for momentary leisure or pleasure; it is the very site of spiritual release. In dalit writings, nature is privileged over culture, and the jungle-raj is a better paradigm of life than the so-called civilization.

Kashmir receives a semi-poetic treatment from Hazari and in his autobiographic account he provides us quite romantic descriptions of the scenic beauty of the hilly landscape:

> From the top of Muree hills there is gradual descent for about thirty miles and within descent for about the road goes down six thousand feet. From the top one could see a little shinning stream curling like a snake through the gorge. this was the river Jhelum which flows through the plain of Kashmir from the rest of India the height of the mountains varies form seven or twelve thousand feet, and in some parts there are sheer precipices; it was a most glorious view and as we descended the tonga men tied a log wood in front of each wheel to act as a brake.(83)

The comparison of shining stream with snake has its cultural connotations. Among the dalits, the snake is not a symbol of surreptitious devilry; it is a symbol of raw and pristine natural grace.

The beauty of valley during the relatively unfriendly season of autumn is as much captured by the gazing eye of Hazari. The fact he notices the change of shades, suggests that he does not merely invoke traditional stock images into play. His description of nature is very much realistic, and not always pre-determinedly romantic: This time the road had a different meaning and the scene had changed it was cold, and some of the trees had already turned yellowish red with the autumn winds. The village shops were selling apples and pears instead of soft fruit. Autumn was in the air. The summer of Kashmir had faded away leaving only its memories . . . .(29). Dalit writers are at their natural best when it comes to their interaction with nature. There seem to strike a natural affinity with nature. Culture alienates them, nature allures them.

Unlike latter-day dalit autobiographies which operate at the level of struggle without solution, Hazari's account ends on a note of some solution. The autobiography ends when he embarks for Europe. Finally

when all attempts at assimilation fail, he flies to Paris in the hope that Europe might provide him a level- play field. Hazari autobiography thus chronicles the life story of an untouchable who endeavours to come to term with Hinduism and Islam, but finally seeks sanctuary in Western Europe as the final abode of liberation. Hazari's ostensibly escapist strategy cannot be ridiculed or undermined. Foreign, particularly Europe gives Dalits a choice of alternative home. The way autobiography steers clear of the false bogey of native nationalism, speaks of Hazari's tentative attempts towards a separatist politics.

Thus Hazari's autobiography though distinct in terms of its 'low' subject matter and 'sublimal' desires and ambitions, fails to forge new| alternative aesthetics. It does pave way for a more confessional Dalit autobiographical discourse. It is caught in all kinds of 'contradictions so characteristics of Ambedkar's political discourse. It seeks modernization of dalits, yet it retains the conventional caste identity; it is written in English and yet it is a discourse of the marginal; it does refer to dalits as different community, yet it ends up with the conversion of the protagonist to Islam. Ambedkar aesthetics is at best constitutional and towards the end, under the influence of Buddhism, it settles in favour of non-combative, assimilative, non- violent 'middle path'. Hazari autobiography too trudges along the same path.

Notes

1. Interestingly, Hazari's autobiography got published in English in America first in 1951 by the Bannisdale Press and then in 1969 by Praeger Publishers. The Foreword of first printing is written by H.S.Polak who seems to have a thorough understanding of the Indian caste society and its victims. Polak begins his Foreword by writing: As the author makes clear, he was born of one of the lowest grades among the untouchables. If he had any special advantage, it was in Northern India. (Foreword, 8).
2. Gandhi invoked an intensely Brahmanical term 'Harijan' for the untouchable. If Ambedkar relied on a patently Western category called 'called', Gandhi lapsed into religious past to coin a condescending term 'Harijan'. This term invited lot of backlash. Ambedkar criticized the use of this term for not only it was overtly sanskritic in character but it was also a term of co-option. Moreover such type of "philanthropic naming by the non-Dalit leaders", as Gopal Guru puts it, lacked "discursive capacity" (261).
3. As a dalit, Ambedkar seeks empowerment through the intervention of Government, Parliament and various legislations.

Methodical and argumentative as ever, Ambedkar presents a confidential memorandum to His Excellency the Governor General in October 1942. This document brings out the constitutionalist character of dalit aesthetics.

4. Ambedkarite aesthetics stands on three distinct features. These are: (i) Dalit aesthetics is aesthetics of argument and analysis based on empirical reasoning and logic; (ii) Dalit aesthetics is aesthetics of constitutionalism. By implication it means that there is clear rejection of the politics of radicalism or violence as means for possible dalit assertion; and finally (iii) Dalit aesthetics seeks a change in the heart of the man, and therefore it is not entirely foregrounded in any material ideology of socialism or capitalism; rather it seek strength from Buddhism. So the three cornerstones of Ambedkarite aesthetics are – empiricism, constitutionalism and conversion, one succeeding the other in a dynamic continuum. It needs be stressed here that Dalit aesthetics during Ambedkar's time itself undergoes shifts as it strives to seek authentic ways to empowerment.

5. Gandhi had an intense and introspective self-analysis through several of his experiments with Truth and seems to be a *Yogi.*

6. Sanskritization is a term coined by the eminent Indian sociologist, M.N.Srinivas, to denote the process by which castes placed lower in the caste hierarchy seek upward mobility by emulating the rituals and practices of the upper or dominant castes. It is a process similar to passing in anthropological terms. Srinivas defined sanskritization as a process by which "*a 'low' or middle Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently 'twice-born' caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant class by the local community....*" (1952, 32).One clear example of sanskritization is the adoption, in emulation of the practice of twice-born castes, of vegetarianism by people belonging to the so-called "low castes" who are traditionally not averse to non-vegetarian food. According to M.N. Srinivas, Sanskritization is not just the adoption of new customs and habits, but also includes exposure to new ideas and values appearing in Sanskrit literature. He says the words *Karma, dharma, papa, maya, samsara and moksha* are the most common Sanskritic theological ideas which become common in the talk of people who are sanskritized (1994, 48).

7. For Dalit Panthers 'dalit' is not just a slogan, it is matter of credo and commitment. It calls for utmost involvement and dedication. In so many words they assert that "Dalit Panther is not a mere slogan" and they want to launch a struggle that confronts institutions and practices of discrimination and exploitation head on: "Panthers will paralyzing attack untouchability, casteism and economic exploitation." They go on to suggest 18-point programme for a possible dalit resurgence. The points cover a whole range of initiatives, which are partly legalistic, partly political and partly social. But the clarion call for what is insistently termed as "final struggle".

8. Limbale's *Outcaste* lies in articulating the interiors of dalit-localities. Dalit-inside is exteriorized, without any aesthetic make-up or camouflage. Limbale takes the reader straight to garbage-piles, the zone of his childhood days thus: "I was used to filthy child of the Maharwada, we hardly knew what a village actually meant as we played and grew up only in Maharwada. Heaps of garbage, tin sheds, dogs, and pigs were our only companions. We spent most of our time on Jaganath Patil's garbage, playing where we found bits of waste paper and sandals"(5).

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Transnational Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*

—Gharge Sunita Sunil

Transnationalism' is a social movement, grown out of the heightened interconnectivity between people and the receding economic and social significance of boundaries among states. The term was coined to describe a new way of thinking about relationships between cultures. Originally it is economic process of multinational corporations, but it refers a recent shift in migration patterns since 1980s. Migration nowadays is increasingly turning into an ongoing movement between two or more social spaces or locations, irrespective of (nation-state) political boundaries. Migration is facilitated by increased global transportation and telecommunication technologies. So more and more migrants have developed strong transnational ties to more than one home country, blurring the congruence of social and geographic space.

Diasporas are precursor of modern transnationalism. Modern Diaspora is a transnational community. Contemporary immigrants can not be characterized as the 'uprooted'. Many are transmigrants, becoming firmly rooted in their new country but maintaining multiple linkages to their homeland. Transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state(Glick Schiller et. al.). Transmigrants settle and become incorporated in localities and patterns of daily life of the country of their adoption. At the same time they maintain connections, influence local and national events of their homeland. Immigrants link together their societies of origin and settlement. They are embedded in more than one society.

'Diaspora', according to Steven Vertovec (1999), is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered "deterritorialized" or "transnational" – that is, which has originated in a land other than which currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe. In the era of "transnationalism" and "globalization" when we talk about transnational identity we are talking about people who are with more than one culture, more than one country, it goes beyond the borders of certain country. Diasporas are the transnational who have the multiple ties and interactions that link people across borders. So the conventional assumptions regarding the 'identity' which

is defined by traditional borders and boundaries, and 'Home' are problematic. Because the stages like 'Home – Away – Return' in the cases of diasporas are changed today due to the reason / goal of their dispersal / migration and Home and Away are connected by advanced technologies of transportation and communication. They do not renounce a 'national' identity like expatriates or do not accept a different 'national' identity like immigrants.

Robin Cohen (2000) classified communities into three categories –(1) Local (2) National and (3) Transnational. Transnational communities "Foster creative and positive bonds between people of different national backgrounds". This tendency is called 'transnationalism' (342). Nowadays migration is ongoing movement between two or more social spaces or localities/locations, irrespective of nation–state (political) boundaries and it is facilitated by technologies of transportation and communication."The process of 'homing desire' does not imply a nostalgic desire for 'roots' nor it is the same as the desire for a homeland", it is realized instead as a construction of multilocationality within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries " (Brah, *Cartographies* 197).

Whatever the impulse for migration, for many people there is no longer the need for 'identificational assimilation'. (Cohen,*Global Sociology*, 353).There are multiple identities. They act as a bridge between particular and universal and can detect 'what is missing' in the societies. The transnational communities are not of place but of interest, shared options and beliefs, tastes, ethnicities and religions. They accept the cultural and religious diversity.

Cohen acknowledges the postmodern reality of diasporas and sees them as builders of transnational community. He states diasporas "are positioned somewhere between nation-states and traveling cultures..." (*Global Diaspora*), Homi Bhabha's *Location of Cultures* reveals the contemporary diaspora's subjectivity which is formed in interstitial cultural space, where one's past and present conjoin in a pluralistic sense. Though both vary in their opinion but acknowledge the transnational subjectivity of the postmodern diasporas. According to them cultural cosmopolitanism is inevitable in our world.Transnational postmodern diasporas are neither assimilationist nor separatist but with multiple cultural attachments. Their subjectivities are formed, in the words of Bhabha, "in- between" national and cultural boundaries.

Stuart Hall in his *Modernity and Its Future* poses questions about identity and provides the description of what may constitute identity. He presents three distinctive concepts of identity in terms of

different types of human subjects : the 'Enlightenment Subject', the 'sociological subject' and the ' postmodern subject' (275).

The postmodern subject is formed in relation to how the subject is represented in different surrounding cultures at different times. As time changes, so identity shifts likewise, as cultural space alters, so identity transforms. Hall attributes the fact that is "postmodern subject" is compelled to exile in search of selfhood to the idea of change: the change of time and space, causing "discontinuities" in modern societies (278). The 'post-modern subject' can be located nowhere as a result of its de-centering. Accordingly, the 'post- modern subject' unable to keep stabilized or unified, has no choice but to accept each of all these shifting identities, always contradictory and problematic because of the various contexts in which they are constructed, remaining fragmented at all times because of their temporary and therefore incomplete formation. It is obvious that this post – modern human subject is "framed against the background of metropolis" as an "isolated, exile, estranged individual", whose inner core has been displaced and whose center has been eliminated. *Modernity and Its Future* of Hall, et, al. examines the forces reshaping modern industrial societies and the patterns, structures and relationships that are emerging in the contemporary world.

Bharati' Mukherjees 'exuberance of immigration' in USA since 1980s and subsequent naturalization make her to shift her focus from 'aloofness of expatriation' to immigrant and her integration into the national culture, acculturation and assimilation. In *Middleman and Other Stories* she portrays her characters being the immigrants from the different corners of the world in USA who identified primarily with the culture and community of their hostland. But then she draws her characters as transnational who remain connected to their homeland and hostland equally in her *Holder of the world* and *Leave it to Me*. They are neither expatriates nor only immigrants in their values and attitudes but transnational, whose network cross the borders of nation – state.

The phase of Bharati's literary career post-2000 shows her coming to terms with diverse expereinces of expatriation, immigration and transnationalization. All these identities are mixed in the novels , published in after 2000. Her trilogy which begins with *Desirable Daughters* (2002) and its sequel *The Tree Bride* (2004) comes its completion with the recent published her *Miss New India* (2011). Tara, a protagonist of *Desirable Daughters* (2002), is the mixture of all these identities. She is transnational, who is migrated, travelled, crossed the nation – state borders, deterritorialized ,displaced , replaced,

transformed, and gets mixed with past and present , 'given' and 'made' identities. Yet she earnestly needs / feels compulsion of search of 'roots' /family history. She does it without nostalgia. She is tired of explaining India to Americans. She is " sick of feeling an alien" (Mukherjee ,*Desirable Daughters* 87). She says I don't belong here ... I don't want to belong (79). But she enjoys the American life, an independent life, as she likes and wants.

"Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home, exiles are principally aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that is contrapuntal" (Said *Reflections on Exile*,186). Identity construction is the passion of each and every individual. Diasporic individual encounters different cultures and is reshaped or reconstructed by them. But in this process he/ she may lose his 'given' identity or can get transformed into a new 'mixed identity'. There is the fluidity, shift in his/her identity. Adaptation, acculturation and assimilation in the host culture by the diasporas / the new migrants create the new identity for them. There is the duality in their mind whether to regain the 'given' identity, identity of 'origin' and 'birthplace' or to adopt the new identity of a diaspora. Transnationals since 1990s are successful in creating the new identity – by mongrelization of the 'old' and the 'new' identity. It is possible due to the voluntary/by choice migration and the technologies of transportation and communication, which made them possible and easy to stay in touch with homeland and hostland. The nation – state borders are open today. Hence Tara in Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* is Indian/ Bangladeshi/American by culture at a time. Her identity is, in the words of Rushdie, "at once plural and partial (*Imaginary Homelands*, 15).

'Melting Pot' as a metaphor of American culture was discarded much before Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughtesrs* (2002), the 6th but first novel of her trilogy. It focuses on typical American search of 'roots' (Family/place of origin /Culture), the origins of an individual which establishes his/her identity in the homeland society but raises the crisis in an adopted country/the hostland. Mukherjee has confessed in an interview that she , here, is playing with author – protagonist relationships (2002) due to her wish to write an autobiography. Tara (Bharati?) the protagonist and I – narrator of *Desirable Daughters* speaks about the American quest to discover who am I? Where she comes from? In Tara's search of 'roots', 'routes' go to the places of homeland (India) and the land of her origins (Mishtigunj, now in Bangladesh) and its impact upon her identity in the land of adoption. It causes to form her transnational identity though she is caught into

interrogation. Whether am I a Bengali Brahmin Indian or immigrant American or somebody else? Once Mukherjee thought of herself as a Bengali rather than even Indian and she was proud of it. She set apart from people of other Indian states. Their culture is different from one another. America made her to see herself as an American of an Indian Bengali origin. Transnational Mukherjee, who crossed the phases like exile, expatriation, immigrant American draws the portraits of her characters with the shades of these colours of different phases of her own life. *Desirable Daughters* is an example of Mukherjjee's 'Two Ways to Belong America'. The *New York Times* in the review of *Desirable Daughters* starts out identifying Bharati as the '*grand dame*'(Edwards 151). She has been dubbed the 'grand dame' of Indian diaspora literature. Her trilogy is Indian and American in setting, theme, characters and cultures. Like Mukherjee her "Tara Bhattacharjee is fluid and adapts to both the traditional culture and her adopted American ethos" (Singh 188) and questions her own identity. The identity crisis and a longing to define one's own identity is triggered off when she is faced with the illegitimate son of her much idolized sister – Padma Didi.

Mukherjee's first novel of the trilogy *Desirable Daughters*, in the words of Edwards: "...grew out of an autobiographical project ... sisters, which took on a life of its own fiction" (xvii). It is grown out of Mukherjee's close conversation with her two sisters at the home of her India – based sister in Bombay. Their conversation was about the choices they had made, how different their lives were and how they all married with their husbands. Mukherjee asserts in an interview by Sonia Chopra that *Desirable Daughters* is not based on real events but does have real background things in it. In *Desirable Daughters* Bharati is coming to terms with what is left of her Indian heritage as a residue and what America she has discovered; knitting the two together, she fictionalizes a world of civilizational encounter. It is a stirring novel of three sisters, two continents and perilous journey from the Old World to the New World, El Dorado and again to the Old World. The journey / mobility, allows characters (mostly female) to move beyond the traditional boundaries of identity / culture and national /geographical boundaries.

Mukherjee states in one of the interviews by Gabriel that "*Desirable Daughters* is the family memory, memoir that Tara is constructing for herself. She who had been anxious to leave the control of her husband, Bish Chatterjee, whom she had misjudged as another patriarch, and get out of the gated community of Atherton to find herself, to go pursue her personal happiness in the Upper Haight of San Francisco, has to come back to realize what it is that she has cut off

from herself .She has to discover and reassess her family history ,she has try to understand her national history . And it is in doing so that she understands her ex-husband Bish , understands why they are very different .Tara needs to immerse herself in that lushness to discover within herself all the sensory details that she had rejected , all that she had not wanted to know ,as a young woman "(137).

Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* is her own return to the imaginary homeland in her memory and an attempt of 'belonging' to more than one culture/ country/ language. She moves back and forth in time and space and cultures to know the history and mystery. Sarika Auradkar appraoches the novle in terms of clash of cultures and its possible impact on the evolution of Tara's identity.

Tara's origins are in Bangladesh but is born in Calcutta, India and she presently resides in USA (California and San Francisco). She is multicultural by birth; she belongs to Indian Bengali Brahmin culture, and by viture her staying on in USA, she is an immigrant American and is now familiar with of American culture. She lives with Hungarian Buddhist carpenter, whose culture, she does imbibe. Mukherjee asserts in an in interview by M. Kransy that "Tara... is living in a world where East is East, West is West is no longer possible because of globalization, art , culture, trade" (Edward 123). Her identity is in crisis. She lives among the people of different national backgrounds (Hungarian, Indian, Chinese, American, Argentine etc.) Her sister also relates with the people of different countries and cultures. Didi Says 'I have tons of Chinese friends" (194). She too is an expatriate Indian. She too acknoweldges the exceptional multicultural character of American society.

Tara is free and well travelled. She is a diaspora with mixed Identity. Her American friends in California suggest that she has returned to earth after a journey to one of outer planets (Calcutta). Calcutta for them is dirtier, crueler, poorer and the outer planet of their universe, where three desirable daughters are born. To them Calcutta is the "magnate of hope" (22), to be a Calcutta is " to be a Londoner, a Parisian, a New Yorker..."(22). To be a Bhattacharjee 'Bhadra lok' is to share tradition of leadership, sensitivity, achievement, refinement and beauty.

19 years old, beautiful, talented, highly protected, Tara is marriageable and her father found a boy Bishwpriya Chatterjee. Without knowing her consent/ agreement /wish/ choice she is ordered "The marriage will be in three weeks" (23). It is not the Indian tradition to ask their daughter about her choice of husband/ life partner and her wish whether she wants to marry or not. In India the parents, especially father or elder brother decide who the best son-in-law for their daughter is and they are the ones who perform marriage rites. It is understood

whatever parents do, they certainly do for their daughters' 'best' future life. Mostly it is understood that their teenage daughters are mature to marry and are prepared enough to handle the pressures of marital life.

Tara,being a wife of an American Indian migrates to US. He works in USA, and with his friend Chester Yee, he has developed a process for computers to create their own time. It is called CHATTY, the operating system for the world. But the rules of their transcontinental relationships are intuited, never acknowledged. Until Chris Dey matters everything is okay, granted them health and peace. Tara shares a lot of things with Parvati in India rather than Padma in USA. Tara keeps secret of her divorce from Indian relatives. But she feels guilty about her son and husband, she has failed Bish. The sisters are unknown to the language of divorce and depression. After divorce she cried but "it was just beginning" (66). To live the life happily being divorcee is possible only in America.

There is travel /displacement /relocation /ranslation / transformation /transnational identity of a transmigrant in *Desirable Daughters*. The epigraph of *Desirable Daughters* is the essence of the journey of Tara's life on the road not taken by the others. It is the road where the rules are not known to the immigrants like Tara , not known what is ahead of them, there is no pattern that they can fall back comfortably on or to comfort them. They are improvising rules on how to behave. It is the mean of survival. Their position is: " No one behind, no one ahead. The path the ancients cleared has closed. And the other path, everyone's path Easy and wide, goes nowhere I am alone and find my way " (1) [It is aSanskrit verse adapted by Octavia Paz and translated by Eliot Weinberger].

Bharati asserts in an interview by Angela Elam that "In 2002 and 2004 ... we have different America ... attitude about immigrants from non – European countries ... are cosmopolitan ... have self confidence. They might say, " I can be here, and also can be three months in my retirement home in India, or a Villa in Italy with ease" (Edward 138). They are transnational and cosmopolitan. Tara is cosmopolitan, who is familiar with Gilbert and Sullivan, Indian way of life, Indian culture, American culture and all that. But she does not have the tradition that she thought supported her. She is the only one among her sisters who listens to her father and lets him find a husband for her. Later she realizes that those traditions were either fraudulent or not worth hanging to. The Indian cultural traditions do not support any of the sisters. White America is not the America of the mythological melting pot. Both white Americans and the Third world immigrants/ non–Europeans have discarded the melting pot myth. So Tara is alone and finds her way.

Indian traditional/ cultural society does not supply the opportunity to make mistakes like three sisters have committed. But Padma and Tara still commit mistakes; they act out all their fantasies. Mukherjee asserts in an interview by Dave Weich that " Only America gives you the opportunity for those kinds of melodramatic errors"

"Migrant writers use often the trope of travel to question fixed understanding of issues of home, identity and nation" (Nyman 199). The three desirable daughters construct themselves in the space of in-betweens. They undergo mutation in thier identity as a result of travel and relocation. Tara's path is from India to USA: gated community in Atherton, California to San Francisco and back to India: Bombay, Missouri, Rishikesh and Mishtigunge (Bangladesh), the novel begins and ends at the same place Mishtigunge, Tara Lata's homeland. 36 year old Tara, Tara Lata's successor tells a tale of her past and present. She is free and well travelled (18). Nyman observes that "Remapping these places and routes leading to them, the novel not only thematizes the issues of diaspora and history but shows the collisions of culture and argues for the importance of transnational linkages in the globalizing world" (Nyman 199)

Nyman argues that the contemporary migration derived from globalization makes it somewhat different. The modernist traveller is always able to return to home, a place that remained the same (201). The fixed notions of identity are changed in the process of migration, globalization and transnationalism. The migrant narratives in which its subjects cross continents, countries often leaving behind their family, culture, but transform into diaspora and reconstitute itself a new thorough encounters with the 'others'.

Transnational migration of Tara makes her to evoke the homeland she left behind, to relocate her and reorient her home. But "the rhetoric of modern San Francisco makes me (Tara) invisible". Yet Tara considers herself "I am all things" not 'Asian' / oriental because of the innocent multicultural kids in the school who don't think her as 'other'. The invisibility frees her to make her over. She thinks "yet I'm still too timid to feed my Ballygunge Park Road identity..."(78). It is fixed identity derived from her homeland.

Bhiku Parekh states that _"For diasporic Indians...traveling is not going away from Home but rather from one home to another" (Parekh (230-42).Tara frequently visits ' lost home'/ homeland India and also she visits her land of origin Bangladesh (Before 1947 it was Hindustan – collectively present India, Pakistan and Bangladesh).Throughout novel India and Bangladesh is in her conscious and unconscious . She wants to restore the past to herself . It is neither homesickness nor the

nostalgia. But nobody can separate from his or her past – the birthplace, culture, family its love. There is binding. She is transnational. She doesn't only desire to return homeland, literally she returns repeatedly though not permanently to trace history (family and nation) for reinscribing her 'given identity' on her 'achieved identity' (American).

Migration makes her displaced but replaced at first with Bishwapriya Chatterjee, her husband in California and she is almost a Valley woman, a wife of billionaire Bish, known to everybody. Marriage and migration has given her limitless and undreamed independence. But she separates for her own independent life, existence, and identity. Her wish to be American wife is not fulfilled by Bish. The couple divorced but stay in touch. He is the provider even after divorce. Independently with her son Tara lives in San Francisco and relates sexually with many men with whom she likes and wants. Andy is one of them, a live- in lover, Hungarian who is fed on violence but now a Buddhist Carpenter. She works in a school though doesn't teach due to lack of certificates. She offers her time and money for a school where 90% Asian children are learning.

Her San Francisco adventure -- a divorcee raising her son, living with Hungarian Andy, could not have been possible in India where there are restriction laid for women, who are not allowed to live life independently, It is unthinkable for divorcee to enter into a live–in relationship with a lover. She lives this life in America. Why divorce does take place? "Why a young woman (like Tara) with everything she could ever want would decide to leave her protector and provider"(66), It is for American adventure. Bharati tells Dave in an interview "Tara leaves him in a huff because she has fabricated an image of him as a kind of father figure and she's decided in her quest for freedom that the gated community in Atherton is prison" (Mukherjee). Her psychological condition makes her to divorce her husband. Mostly she is alone at home, she is not allowed to work, she wants to drive but she thinks what the society will say, and where to go? It is the Indian way of woman to think. She can go anywhere in America. She understands it and after 10 years she left Bish, her husband. Bish is a typical traditional Indian husband who does not understand her needs and problems, yet he allows her what she wants to do – divorce, job, live-in–relationship. For their son they however stay in touch with each other. They are Indian and American, the transnational. She is transformed, an Indian desirable daughter, a Hindu good wife and a mother is transformed into an American wife, an American immigrant. Though divorcee she raises her son and is always connected with her parents being a dutiful daughter. Eventually she unites Bish as his beloved.

The arrival of Chris Dey in her life is a turning point affords her an opportunity to evaluate her past, family, culture and her present identity. She is Indian in her unconscious, consciously she is American, in her choice of clothes and hair cut and language and way of life in general. Deep in her mind Hindu consciousness pulls either or pushes her to respond to things around her. Hence she not only complains police about Chris but she enquires about her family; she invents the roots of it. Tara tries to connect the pieces of past through the lens of memory. Paravti writes her "please, please, don't become that Americanized"(105). Tara is very assimilated in America yet she visits East Bengal in an attempt to learn about her ancestors, great aunt Tara Lata. It is Tara Lata's transformation from a docile Bengali Brahmin girl child into a freedom fighter/organizer of resistance against the British Raj thatin a way partly inspires Tara's American identity and transformation. Tara's return to rooted self and infusing it with new meaning or understanding is for transformation/ mongrelization. There is hunger for connectedness. Actually Mukherjee sets herself to tell her Indian readers about Indian expatriates in America and her American readers about weird customs of immigrants from different countries of the world.

Mobility /travel /migration /movement play an extremely important role in the construction of identity of Mukherjee's female protagonists. It creates the double consciousness of an individual. America is the emergent space of a transnational consciousness for Tara, There is cross cultural encounter. Padma Mehta ,Tara's elder sister, Didi, is well travelled. Due to her Ronald Dey affair, her Daddy sent her to finishing school. Paravati informs Tara that "Didi went to that 'finishing school' in Switzerland in England". Padma tells Tara "I met a boy in London when I was over there ... Soharb Batliwalla ... job offer from NYU and came over ... I moved in with him"(235-36). Presently Padma lives in New Jersey, America with Harish Mehta, an Indian immigrant, one of the "midnight's Children"(181), uprooted from Punjab in 1947, Padma loves Danny Jagtiani, another immigrant from India. She is the follower of Indian tradition in her cloths, hairstyle, food , but her values are American. Her relations with Ronald, Sohrab, Danny, Harish, Darshan indicate her American values.

Tara's another elder sister Parvati also migrated USA for studies like Bharati's younger sister Ranu Vanikar. There she met and married Aurobindo Banerji in Boston bank. After marriage couple has settled in Bombay. Tara's husband Bish Chaterjee is born and brought up and studied in India but for higher study he migrates Stanford and works there, becomes a billionaire, he is really widely travelled man, a

transnational scholar. Tara migrates with him to California. He has formed the company project CHATTY, the operating system for the world. The following expressions show the transnational character of the network – (a) "I went to Bangladesh..(269)" where his family origins are (East Bengal); (b) "He had started an assembly plant in Bangalore, a Marketing arm in Bombay ... to start up in Bangladesh ... Taiwan and Malaysia, Chet Yee ... Chinese front ... Australia (261). Like Moghal emperors Bish maintains a series of palaces around the known world, and bestows new wealth. His professional network is transnational. But he is not transformed like Tara. After divorce he is an expert of loneliness outside of marriage. That loneliness made Tara a wanton. Bish doesn't understand Tara's problem being the Indian husband. He is a typical Bengali son in America.

Tara's ' Mistri' Andy is an immigrant American whose origins are in Hungary who has migrated to America and has travelled in India, Japan, crossed Austrian border as a two year old during the 1956 uprising , a hippie biker turned Buddhist carpenter, a Zen retrofitter. Almost all major characters in *Desirable Daughters* originate in a land other than which they currently reside, and have crossed the borders of nation – states, travelled, migrated, and they are at least bi-cultural, and transnational. They are displaced and replaced, the de-territorialized and re-territorialized. But some of them are transformed into the new beings. Tara, Danny, Harish, Pdma ,Mr and Mrs. Ghosal,Bish, Andy are translated beings. Mukherjee reads the world, people from different countries and in getting into their shoes she responds to them.

Transnationalists remain connected with their homeland, the country from which they migrate. Tara a transnational is more connected with Paravati than Padma who is in USA.Parvati is the only sister who resides in India .Tara says "At least once a week I talk with Parvati in Bombay and about once a month with my parents in Rishikesh..(52). Tara doesn't know Padma like she knows Parvati.She muses "I've been trying to catch up for thirty years" (197). Padma and Harish have been married for 20 years but Tara has never met him. To know family secrets Tara connected Padma, visits her, yet she doesn't open the secret of her life.

Unlike Jasmine, Hannah, Devi, Tara's identity transformation/ fluidity is not displayed through the renaming or change in the name of Tara. But she is the mixture/ compound of Indian expatriate, immigrant American and transnational identities. Her search of roots, her divorce for American life and stay with live–in–lover independently, her job in the school , her encounter with Chris Dey, alertness of danger, curious to know the family history, her visits to homeland, reunion/reconciliation

with Bish, her husband are the indicators of her compounded /mixed identity.The names of Bishwapriya Chatterjee, Rabindranath Chatterjee, Devanand Jagtinati, Christopher Dey, Andra Karolyi, Ronald Dey are shortened into Bishi, Rabi/ Rob, Danny, Chris, Andy, Ron. It is a token of Americanization.

The multiple identities of imposter Chris Dey are represented with multinames. Danny knows Chris Dey as Abdul Rehman, who worked in Danny's restaurant and caught stealing. Abdul Rehman is one of the aliases like Abbas Sattar Hai, Diego D' Souza, Sunil Ghose, Harilal Guha, Wahid Ali Ahmad. He is " known to assume the identities of his victims... a true chameleon"(220). He is born in Bihar, Raised in Calcutta and later joined Dawood gang in Bombay. Tara is aware of Bish's transnational network of his CHATTY. In the *The Tree Bride* the sequel of *Desirable Daughters* Tara tells " At the time of bombing ,CHATTY had assembly plants in twenty countries , research facilities on three continents ,and a worldwide workforce of well over a hundred and fifty thousand "(17). "Wealthy beyond counting" (23) Bish has developed a process for allowing computers to create own time, recognizing signal intended only for them, for instantaneously routing information to the least congested lines. He is the poster boy of Indian entrepreneurship, the guest of trade magazines and financial networks, a provider, protector, speaker in Boston, New York, Tokyo, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Manila. The CHATTY network, by which Bish, Andy, Jack Sidhu, Rabi Parvati, Tara, Auro – are linked, is the operating system of billion of cell phones with the ever–widening chips. So "the world is getting smaller every day" (256). Bish is thinking CHATTY's second and third generation. The phones are first generation and wireless is powerful.

Bish has started plants in Bangalore, Bombay,Taiwan, Malaysia,China and wants to start in Bangladesh. The family origins of Tara and Bish are in East Bengal and India is their homeland but he is the reigning genius of Silicon Valley. He is on vacation with Rabi in Australia. It gives an idea of his transnational network of his work. Vandana Singh observes that "After 9/11, *Desirable Daughters* flaunts introduction of underworld network and terrorism on the American scenario" (Singh 193). Transnational network of crime is drawn though the portrait of fake multilingual Chris Dey who claims Tara being his auntie, 'Tara mashi'. She crosschecked him but doesn't trace, so she complains to the police .Globalization greatly enhances the possibilities of white collar crime because of more open borders, computer link-ups and enhanced links of transport and communication (Cohen *Global Sociology*,158).Bharati Mukherjee tells in an interview that " the

gangsters that I 'm writing about in this novel are ... smaller in their vision, narrower in their vision, and they go for not the World Trade Centre but the house that the ex – husband of the narrator, Tara, is visiting, because he' s the Bill Gates" (Edwards126-27).

The real Christopher Dey of Indian national of Bhopal, M.P. India., is probably murdered (?), whose body is found in the delta, whose identity is used by Abbas Satar Hai, a member of the Dawood gang. They are into drugs, prostitution, movies, home invasions, kidnapping, extortion, arson, and bombing. Singh informs Tara "They go where the money is ... high tech... software designers and chip engineers"(223). Dawood gang controls organized crime in Bombay ... criminal ... networks all over Asia and the Middle East ... Gulf "(202). Chris Dey /Abbas Sattar Hai's target is according to Jack Singh Sidhu, "your husband and your son, and you, Tara..."(224). Eventually Tara's house, when Tara, Rabi and Bish are at home, in San Francisco, has been attacked in which Bish is injured badly, lost his consciousness, admitted in the hospital for long time and then in the rehabilitation center. But he saves Tara. They are the victims of international crime. It is his crime that "Once, I (Bish) held the world in my hand ..."(279). He is the inventor of CHATTY. Enhanced links of transportation, communication and information are very useful for the transnational work of diasporas. Advances in transportation and communication technology connected America to the world; it is not only expanding American culture to the globe but also bringing the world into America.

Diasporas are neither expatriates nor immigrants,separatists or assimilationists but they are transnational. Since late 1980s they migrate in search of work for the purpose of settlement. Diasporic consciousness may not develop if immigrants refuse to assimilate and are accepted in the closed classical frames. In the present they keep ties with the group in respect of language, religion, cultural form, and endogamy. They have also the myth of homeland and connection to homeland and they face the problem of social exclusion in the hostland societies. (Cohen, rpt. *Global Diaspora*, 62). They overcome it. They are the mobilized diaspora, who are modernized with their network, linguistic and occupational advantages. They are very familiar with advanced technologies of transportation and communication; Home and Exile are connected by rapid transport, electronic communication and cultural sharing. They do not feel unilaterally alienated, nostalgic, homesick and homeless.

Bish is a very successful man in terms of technology, Bharati says "he is my imagined, chosen bridegroom or bridegroom that my

parents would have chosen, so late in life I invented him" (Edwards 127), he is Bill Gates of the South Asian American community.
Like Ven Iyer in *The Holder of the World,* Bish is an engineer, information designer, a graduate from IIT, Khargpur, India, a scholar of Stanford. He has developed a process for allowing computers to create their own time, recognizing signals intended only for them for instantaneously routing information to the least congested lines. While watching T.V. Bharati says in an interview given to Gabriel "he (Bish) can integrate American football he watches Joe Montana ... on TV, and gets the brainwave for CHATTY ..."(138).While watching on TV the Sunday football game he gets the inspiration, and developes the system of CHATTY, a computer programme, nothing would work without it in modern world. It is the operating system for the world, the operating system of tiny phones with the ever widening chips. Due to 'CHATTY' the world is getting smaller every day. Bish is involved in CHATTY'S second and third generation. He is caught in the middle of traditionalists and westernized progressives. He might be the reigning genius of Silicon Valley, so he is the target of Dawood Gang and when he accompanies Tara, her house is attacked with powerful explosives, firebombed. Tara Chatterjee's American Dream is shattered by a fire–bombing of their Silicon Valley home, in which Bish ,her successful entrepreneur husband, is crippled. A suspect is hauled in and paraded before the international media.

Media (electronic) plays very vital role in the present age of information. Tara lives in San Francisco, connects with her sisters in Bombay, India and Padma in New Jersey, USA, Bish and Rabi in Australia and USA, Ronald Dey in Bombay, Jasbir Singh in San Francisco on telephone. Tara tells, "At least once a week I talk with Parvati in Bombay and about once a month with my parents in Rishikesh... Uttar Pradesh call them""(52). At another place she tells, "I called Parvati from the wall phone in the kitchen" (59). At yet another place, "It was early evening in Bombay when I (Tara) dialed her number ...international "(109). The references to the modern gadhets of communication are galore: "I sent a message to Andy's pager ... couriered Dr. R. Swarup Dey at the Worli address" (115) and " Telephone and telegraph wires have been served"(308). All these expressions show Tara's reconnectedness to the past homeland, family ties. It is her desire to return and connect with them. It is possible today due to the revolution in the communication, transportation and information technology.

Parvati informs Tara from Bombay "Finding an address on the Web is child's play ... Even our Bombay Bandits use computers to come up with names, addresses, financial info,... so organized ... fly off

to Dubai" (62). Use of internet, websites, telephones, cell phone, TV, radio, wireless, planes is very casual today due to its cheapness, easiness and modernity. Tara's frequent visits to India are possible due to the modern/advanced technologies of transportation. She tells " ... I had visited Parvati in Bombay ... Just after my divorce " (64), "Last February when I stopped in Bombay on my way to find what remains of our ancestral village of Mishtigunj .... (71).

Tara's another expression gives the details of the role of the modern technology has played in the lives of diaspora. She says "When I got home, the answering machine had four stored messages for me to deal with... hate ... I didn't grow up with answering machines. E-mail is different, I love e-mail. Thanks to Bish, e-mail as the most natural way to communicate, it's a lot easier than talking. I wished I could confront Rabi by e-mail instead of in Person" (86).The following expression of Tara reinforces the dependence on modern means of communication technology thus: "My message on her machine went unanswered" (109). Tara feels courier services are too slow. Parvati's rambling letters she receives. Mukherjee has used the letters to inform and develop the plot. Tara feels fortunate that in this world Bish helped people to get the information on internet -- "the scholarly itch can be scratched by a minute or two on the Internet" (132). Dr. Sergeant Sidhu thanks Mr. Chatterjee for CHATTY network which will help him "to get the official Christopher Dey visa photo from INS. That'll settle things with one call" (147).

Migration and marriage has transformed the three desirable daughters. Among them Tara's topsy-turvy change is remarkable. She transforms herself from expatriate into immigrant into transnational, like a chameleon, due to her birth in westernized and traditional Indian family, convent school education , marriage, migration,American Dream, freedom,money provided by husband - all of them have empowered Tara to reconstruct her transnational identity.

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The Silence of the Bride: Honour or Horror?

— G.A. Ghanshyam

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.

Simone de Beauvoir

One of the prominent feminist writers and thinkers, Simone de Beauvoir transformed into words, the ideology underlying the identity formation of a woman in every patriarchal society. Honour, shame, modesty, decorum, submission and sacrifice are all qualities ingrained into the feminine psyche since childhood. She is crafted and created into an epitome of virtue; an ideal of selflessness, love and compassion, and most importantly upholding the golden virtue of silence. Born with a voice she is conditioned to suppress it into submission and silence.

Patriarchal society runs on the well oiled wheels of male supremacy and authority, and female inferiority and muteness. The supposed inferiority of women is more of a male dominated cultural manipulation of a woman's potential than a fact. The theory of gendered subalternity represents the silenced voice of these women who are made victims at the altar of patriarchy in the name of honour and shame. In patriarchal culture it is the woman who is ordained to be the preserver and carrier of culture and tradition; the upholder of honour and pride. Her natural instincts and desires are sacrificed and her individuality squashed in order to maintain the codes of tradition and culture that binds her life and identity within the precincts of morality and family honour.

With the development of the feminist movement in social and literary circles, awareness has been raised regarding the plight and position of women. Various social activists and writers have come forth to shed light on the life and problems of women, as a way to create further awareness about the issue and bring a change in the society. Moreover their attempts are directed towards rendering an equal status to women as a human being with her own individual identity, dreams and desires. In India also we have witnessed a gradual transformation in the position of women and the emergence of the new woman who is an amalgamation of the best of both worlds- old and new. However the journey is still in its transitory phase and miles away from its final destination of equality and liberation. Along this journey many women have struggled, suffered and presented an exemplary example of courage and confidence. Some of these women though fictional in character inspire and motivate with their sheer grit and determination of spirit.

Various writers have rendered a voice to these millions of voiceless women. Conjured up through the imagination of their creators, often these characters are an echo of the real women who have inspired the writers. In *Shame*, Salman Rushdie writes about one such girl who was made a victim to patriarchy and became the inspiration for his protagonist Sufiya.

> Not so long ago, in the East End of London, a Pakistani father murdered his only child, a daughter, because by making love to a white boy she had brought such dishonour upon her family that only blood could wash away the stain. The tragedy was intensified by the father's enormous and obvious love for his butchered child, and by the beleaguered reluctance of his friends and relatives (all 'Asians' . . . to condemn his actions. (Rushdie 115)

Every year in our country young girls pay a heavy price for following their hearts. By breaking the code of honour imposed upon them by their family and society they court an untimely death and sometimes even worse, intense abuse and torture at the hands of their own family. It is the untold story of many women across the world but predominant mostly in the orthodox and traditional societies.

Two women writers from the subcontinent who have given a loud and clear voice to the ongoing saga of exploitation and abuse of women are Bapsi Sidhwa and Namita Gokhale. These writers through their fictional work have brought forward the story of suffering and pain that engulfs any woman who dares to transgress the predetermined codes of conduct and behaviour. In the two novels taken into consideration for the present paper, namely *The Pakistani Bride* (TPB) and *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory* (SPM), the respective writers have voiced the anguish and struggle of two women, hailing from two different cultures and backgrounds, undertaking two different paths in life, yet similar in their confinement, frustration, exploitation, and their struggle for liberation.

Munni was a young child when the Partition horrors broke across India and Pakistan. Losing her parents to the bloodied frenzy of hatred spilling across the borders, she is rescued and adopted by Qasim who names her Zaitoon after his own dead daughter. Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* is the story of Zaitoon and her escape to freedom. In Gokhale's novel *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory*, the protagonist, Shakuntala has a change of name but this forging of a new identity is more of her own choice than a result of the circumstances.

Both the writers have trailed the growth and development of their protagonists' right from their childhood. The altar of patriarchy

on which they will be ultimately sacrificed requires years of preparation and conditioning. And so we find Miriam, Zaitoon's neighbour and a surrogate mother to her object to Qasim's decision regarding her education. A similar and more pronounced judgment that suppresses Shakuntala's desire for knowledge is made by her widowed mother ". . . as the scriptures were forbidden to women." (SPM 11). Young girls especially those belonging to orthodox traditions and hailing from socio-economically challenged backgrounds have to face more stringent restrictions and codes that define their existence within confined limits. Shakuntala is a far more spirited girl than Zaitoon and finds it more difficult to subdue her free spirit. Denied the support and affection of her mother, who showers all her love on her son Govind; Shakuntala rebels strongly. In case of Zaitoon, love and affection is certainly not short in her life. Miriam and Qasim showers their love and care on her. Though Miriam is conventional in her approach and advises Qasim to take Zaitoon out of her school when she reaches puberty, yet it is her gentle care and love that enables Zaitoon to transcend the bounds of childhood and lead a happy carefree life under her tutelage. She learns the womanly skills expected of her like cooking, sewing, shopping, etc.; and the usual visits to the neighbours. But for Shakuntala her first steps towards womanhood are wrought with the feelings of pain, hurt and abandonment. When her mother finds her bleeding in the kitchen, she scolds her severely "Have you no modesty, girl . . . Defiling the household fires . . ." (SPM 31). She drags her to the low stoop beside the cowshed and leaves her there. A young child, Shakuntala is left shocked, confused and afraid. She is unaware of what is happening to her and fears that she might bleed to death alone. But the rebellious spirit that she has in her asserts itself and in a fit of rage she breaks through the door and walks towards the wilderness of the forest. It is a strange mysterious woman in the forest who consoles and comforts her, making her realize that she is not accursed but in fact "blessed" (SPM 34). Her words of wisdom seem strange to the naïve ears of Shakuntala at the time but in truth are a revelation of the feminine power that lies buried in every woman's soul; hidden and forgotten. "Remember that in every one of her forms the goddess is always Swamini, mistress of herself." (SPM 35).

When a girl reaches puberty it is common for families to settle their marriage as soon as possible without a thought as to their immaturity, dreams, aspirations or choice. Miriam clearly voices the concern and traditional approach to marriage as the ultimate safe haven for a girl. ". . . she'll be safe only at her mother-in-law's . . . A girl is never too young to marry . . ." (TPB 53). Marriage is the ultimate destination or goal for every girl's life; in fact it is the only way she can complete

herself and define her identity in a patriarchal society, as someone's wife.

Qasim promises the hand of Zaitoon to his cousin Misri Khan, a member of the Kohistani tribe to which he also belongs. Even when his friend Nikka and Miriam try to make him see sense about the incompatibility of a young girl from the plains growing up in the city of Lahore being wedded to a boy from the mountains, he stands by his promise that he had given to his brother from the tribe. The prospect of returning to his roots far exceeds his affection for the daughter he had come to love as his own. Zaitoon loves her father dearly and is too young to understand the complications and complexities of such a match. She stays by her father's word and follows him in his journey to the mountains enamoured by his tales of the mountains. For Shakuntala, marriage is an agreeable proposition than living a confined existence at her mother's home. "I was eager to be married, for I saw it as an escape from the bondage of my situation." (SPM 18).

Zaitoon appears docile compared to Shakuntala as she silently follows the words of her father without the slightest hesitation and apprehension. She travels through rough terrain and mountain steeps accompanied by her father, and is full of sweet anticipation, ". . . her heart was buoyant – and at the same time filled with misgiving. Would he like her . . . She fell to dreaming. Surely her future husband would like her young face and her thick lashes. She felt alternately fearful and elated." (TPB 149). It is only when she reaches the village and becomes conscious of her father's inevitable departure that she feels scared of the new strange environment and people. Her fear and desperation compels her to speak to her father regarding her misgivings of the marriage for the first time. Her father tries to console her and becomes furious at her apprehensions. He threatens her, "I've given my word. On it depends my honour. It is dearer to me than life. If you besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands." (TPB 158). A girl has no say in the matter of choosing her partner. It is the parents or the elders who make the most important decision for her. In traditional and orthodox communities, a girl exercising her choice is met with great opposition and often with torture, abuse and death. Zaitoon is scared but her father's dilemma silences her into submission. Even Qasim feels an unnamed fear for his beloved child but is unable to turn back on his word.

Marriage being a happy alternative for the restricted and confined life of Shakuntala, she gladly embraces the changes that it brings into her life. In her surging hopes for marital bliss and the freedom and authority it would bestow on her, Shakuntala resembles Naveed in

her optimism who pronounces, "Marriage is power . . . It is freedom . . . Then who can tell you what to do? (Rushdie 155). But how free is free for a woman bound by the shackles of patriarchy? First she was bound by the codes of honour to her filial household and after marriage to her husband's. Wherever she is, she can only live in an illusion of freedom but never breathe the genuine air of liberation. Shakuntala is much younger to her husband, Srijan who is a widower, having been married twice before. Strong and rebellious in nature, she is however coached to appear demure and docile during her marriage, submitting willingly to the dictates and codes that determine the nature, character and behaviour of a girl: what she should do and what she shouldn't. "Now I was a bride, I had been instructed to look at the earth, to keep my gaze down and appear modest. Even as I garlanded my bridegroom, I looked down and saw only feet." (SPM 39).

Traditional societies follow gender segregation, with the result that both the sexes grow in a repressive atmosphere in total ignorance of the other. Sidhwa describes the traditional household that is divided into two sections. "Rooms with windows that open to the street were allotted to the men: the dim maze of inner rooms to the women – a domain given over to procreation, female odours and the interminable care of children." (TPB 56). Further description of the patriarchal structure of society and family follows that gives a glimpse of the "Proud husbands, fathers and brothers . . . the providers. Zealous guardians of family honour and virtue . . . in their homes . . . pampered patriarchs . . ." Kings of their homes they left as soon as ". . . the household was visited by unrelated women . . ." (TPB 56). Carol, an American married to a Pakistani finds it difficult to adjust to the repressed atmosphere of her new home. Segregation and repression in the society makes her aware of a subtle yet strong undercurrent of sexually charged atmosphere. Ogled by the tribesmen, Carol is reduced to a mere thing. "The obscene stare stripped her of her identity. She was a cow, a female monkey, a gender opposed to that of a man – charmless, faceless, and exploitable." (TPB 120).

It is this segregation and repression because of which ignorance reigns over the consciousness of young, immature girls regarding man-woman relationship and her role and position in it. Zaitoon is terrified when faced with her young bridegroom, Sakhi. Jealously possessive of his possessions, a man tries to grab them with his might. A woman; a wife is also a possession to be marked by him as his property with force and authority. Witness to Zaitoon's journey through the mountains with her father, accompanied by a young soldier, a stranger who helped her on the way, Sakhi is filled with murderous rage and rips Zaitoon's

clothes off her, pushing her into a fit of terrified hysteria. Calmed down moments later, he consummates his marriage with her and Zaitoon feels emotion of love and longing surging within her for the man, her husband, who had assaulted her. She grows accustomed to the life in the hills but the sight of the mountain road trailing down the hills reminds her of home and people she knew. Her fascination for the road and the military vehicles is met with suspicion and hatred by Sakhi. She is often beaten and abused. What position a woman holds in the family is vividly revealed when Sakhi in a fit of rage violently strikes his mother, Hamida.

If life becomes a daily struggle and torment for Zaitoon after her marriage, it is full of bliss for Shakuntala. She glows with marital happiness and love. The lady of the household she cherishes her new found freedom, and enjoys her walks to the forest and her swims in the streams. However her freedom is bound to her duties as a wife. As a part of the after marriage rituals, Srijan had taken her outside to view the night sky and guide her sight towards, ". . . the star Arundhati. She . . . the purest of wives, the emblem of fidelity." And as Srijan guided her vision towards the star, he promises to guide her in their ". . . life together towards the vision of right and wrong." (TPB 42). However her happy married life is eclipsed by the shadow of her inability to conceive. Srijan was left without an heir from his previous marriages and all hopes were centred on Shakuntala. The burden of barrenness is the lot of women to bear and Shakuntala finds herself buried underneath this weight. Various rituals are performed as foretold by astrologers and pundits which only makes her more aware of her inadequacy. When Srijan brings home the woman, Kamalini as her handmaiden, the secure world of Shakuntala's marital life starts to develop cracks of suspicion and betrayal. Her confidence shattered and feeling insecure of Srijan's love and interest, Shakuntala craves for and fights for his attention and love. She is unsettled and insecure because of Kamalini's presence and often wanders to the Matrika temple in the forest. Eventually Shakuntala does conceive but her pregnancy fails to satisfy the craving in her heart that had always remained hidden within her. When asked by the priest why she was not happy, Shakuntala replies, "I want to see the world" (TPB 103) and is instructed by the priest to be content in her role as the wife, but contentment or peace is difficult to find when one is involved in a fight with oneself.

Zaitoon is trapped in an abusive and loveless marriage while Shakuntala is trapped by her own wandering soul. The thirst for 'self' and the thirst for experience that throbs within these women ultimately break free in their flight from home. "If you hold down one thing you hold down the adjoining. In the end, though, it all blows up in your face." (Rushdie 173). Exploitation and torture, both physical and

psychological hurt and inflict wounds that run deep into the psyche of the victims. Zaitoon is battered and beaten; alienated in her new environment without love and support. Shakuntala on the other hand has everything that a woman could possibly desire: a prosperous household, material comforts and a loving husband. But then things change. Her very identity is made a hostage to the presence of a mysterious and strange woman by her husband who instructs her, "Do not ask any questions . . . She has been brought here as your handmaiden, and that is all. See that you treat her well." (TPB 58).

Zaitoon has the spirit of perseverance and great courage. She flees from the clutches of her sadistic husband and the stringent environment of the tribe. Her journey down the mountains is filled with many perils and dangers but she risks everything for a chance to liberate herself. If her instinct of self preservation had enabled her to adjust to her surroundings and chores, it was the same survival instinct that made her flee. Once her escape is known, the men from her family and tribe hunt for her across the mountains. Hamida ruefully thinks:

Honour! She thought bitterly. Everything for honour – and another life lost! Her loved ones dead and now the girl she was beginning to hold so dear sacrificed. She knew the infallibility of the mountain huntsmen . . . Men and honour. And now the girl . . . She, who had been so proud and valiant and wholeheartedly subservient to the ruthless code of her forebears, now loathed it with all her heart. (TPB 190-91)

The code that cried for blood to regain an honour lost, propelled the men to search and scan the entire landscape for Zaitoon with the zeal of fanaticism. Alone yet determined Zaitoon moves forth through difficult and unknown terrain, hungry and in pain. Frail and weak she tries to quench her thirst from the river when three men chance upon her and rape her mercilessly. Left to die, she drifts in and out of consciousness. Undaunted by the excruciating pain, Zaitoon crawls farther and farther. Her life instinct strong and alert again, she continues her journey towards the bridge that will deliver her to the safety of the military outpost. She hides behind boulders of stone and within the hollow crevices, waiting patiently for a safe way across the bridge. She is rescued and ultimately wins back her freedom and her life.

The escape of Shakuntala from the comfortable confines of her home and her role as a wife happens not of its own accord but through the agency of an individual whom she chances upon while returning from her visit to the Shiva shrine. The stranger whom she encounters is a Yavana, a Greek traveler and merchant who is enticed by her beauty. The intimacy and exhilaration in his embrace, and the charm and

attraction of the strange unknown world he embodies; a world for which she had always craved to know and experience engenders a strange feeling of abandonment in Shakuntala. She leaves him only to return later. Once the priest had explained to her the symbolism of her anklets; "Your anklets weigh down your feet to keep you rooted in your home and family." (SPM 103), and so when Shakuntala abandons her home and her husband to flee with the Yavana, Nearchus, she abandons them too. "Taking off my silver anklets, I flung them into the water and ran towards him." (SPM 115). With Nearchus she redefines her identity as Yaduri, a name that broke the taboos like she did for it stood in slang as a word that ". . . signified a yoni, a woman's private part." (SPM 119). The free spirit that she was born with, Shakuntala flies from her nest, abandoning and breaking the codes of society and culture. Her actions negate any attempts at comprehension at a superficial, practical and materialistic level. Giving in to her sensual instincts with a wild abandon, she embodies the free flowing spirit of nature that breaks all bounds and barriers constructed to obstruct and control her way. She is the life force itself, wanton and free willed losing her way in the maze of sensory pleasures in her unquenchable thirst for an identity of her own; free and liberated.

"Society, being codified by man, decrees that woman is inferior; she can do away with this inferiority only by destroying the male's superiority." (Beauvoir). Shakuntala destroys the rules and codes of patriarchy by forging her own path, breaking the taboos that kept her safely reigned in within the honour and decorum of socially sanctified relationships and roles. She travels with Nearchus across the country, eagerly absorbing all the details and experiences of his travels and knowledge of the world. His passionate and wild love excites and arouses Shakuntala, who devours as much as she herself is devoured. She had loved Sirjan and carried his child within her, yet she is also attached dearly with Nearchus. Their arrival at Kashi, the holy and mysterious city of redemption, renunciation and salvation touches her soul with an awareness of her own self. Stranded on the left bank of the city meant for outsiders, Shakuntala is reminded of her fall from grace. She becomes deeply conscious of her growing detachment from the body that indulges in sensual pleasures with Nearchus. Her thirst for travel and experiences satiated, she does not want to wander any longer and one night leaves Nearchus to journey across the river to the other side. Shakuntala's wanderings on the streets of Kashi and finally her death re-assert the sanctity and inevitability of the codes that define honour and morality for a woman. Fallen from grace and dignity, a woman's transgression can only be met with human or divine retribution.

Shakuntala meandered in her path to find her own 'self' but even in her death she declared, "I had not wasted my life." (SPM 208).

Patriarchy exerts its control and dominance over the women, no matter to which strata of society they belong. It might seem a little obvious in the case of educated and elite people but basically the attitude remains the same. In Kiran Desai it is a highly qualified and learned person, a Judge who vents his frustration and anger onto his innocent wife. In *The Pakistani Bride*, Carol who marries into an elite Pakistani family has to endure the suspicion and jealousy of her husband, Farukh. Her involvement with Major Mushtaq is an outcome of the repressive and constrictive atmosphere that she is forced to live in.

In an atmosphere that oppresses a woman and negates her identity, a woman literally has no voice of her own. If something bad happens to her it is always the fault of the woman. A woman's ordeal of life and death as faced by Zaitoon is something that she had, "asked for" (TPB 226) by daring to defy the codes of honour that defined her place and identity. Carol cannot help think of the fate of millions of women who according to the terms laid down by patriarchy asked for the torment, the torture, the abuse and the exploitation. Women the world over, through the ages, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten-up, bullied and disinherited. (TPB 226).

A woman has her nose cut off, another gets striped and raped, a third gets killed. There are numerous tales of inhuman and beastly treatment that women of all ages have to face and endure in this world of ours. Many a young girl has to lose their dreams and compromise to a life of denial, play roles decreed out for them irrespective of their own desires and choices. Every year many a girl dies an unnatural death at the altar of patriarchal honour literally or symbolically. What is true honour but a respect for the life that flows through all of us; the divine spark that enlightens each individual, men or women. If death becomes honour, then is it honour or horror?

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Booker-Winning Indian Narratives – Politics and Design

—Meenu Gupta

Indian English Novel

It is often claimed that unlike the British novel or the novel in indigenous Indian languages, English fiction in India has no genealogy of its own. It is a heterogeneous body of fiction in which certain dominant trends and recurrent themes are, nevertheless, discernible. Its emergence out of the colonial encounter and nation-formation has impelled the English novel to return repeatedly to the question: 'What is India?' In the most significant works of English fiction, 'India' emerges not just as a theme but as a point of debate, reflection, and contestation. Writers whose works are considered in this context include Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, RK Narayan, Salman Rushdie, Nayantara Sahgal, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, and Vikram Seth.

Quite naturally, the novels written during the period of the nationalist movement for independence, aptly called the Gandhian period of Indian literature, tend to identify themselves and their protagonists idealistically with the struggle. In the aftermath of political independence, as the new nation-state sought to consolidate its power, the expansive, multiple languages of the freedom movement shrank and hardened into a more limited, coercive discourse.

In general, then, the Indian English literary scene in the late seventies and early eighties was in the doldrums as is evident from the Sahitya Akademi's, *Indian Literature*, that summed up the contemporary Indian English literary scene as "mediocre and . . . meretricious."(18) By 1980, nation and novel had reached a state of impasse: both the unitary model of the modern nation-state and the narrative of the modern Indian English novel needed radical re-thinking. The publication of *Midnight's Children* broke both deadlocks simultaneously: at once eulogy and elegy for the unitary model of nation-state that had failed to deliver the promises of the Indian freedom movement, and a new literary and conceptual model that opened new worlds of possibility for re-imagining and representing enabling relationships between individual and nation.

It was a watershed in development of the Indian English novel, so much so that the term "post-Rushdie" came to refer to the decade or so afterwards in which a wave of novels appeared by young writers that were clearly influenced by *Midnight's Children*. *Midnight's Children* brings heresies into the open and transforms them into

prophecies. In the eighties the new narratives of nation burst forth in a dazzling display of artistic pyrotechnics with a new confidence in self, language, and form.

Booker and India

Though it took a long while for Indian writings to break into this elite club, still it has a rich tradition. Roy may be the first Indian to win the Booker, but four books with Indian themes or by writers of Indian origin had already won the prize: V.S. Naipaul's *In a Free State* (1972), J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), Ruth Prawer Jhabwala's *Heat and Dust* (1975) and of course, *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie (1981).Canadian author Yann Martel who won the prize in 2002 for *Life of Pi* deals in his novel about the life of a youth who lives in Pondicherry. Germany-born Ruth Prawer Jhabwala was awarded the Booker in 1975 for her work *Heat and Dust*, which views India through the lives of two English women living 50 years apart. British novelist J.G. Farrell won the prize in 1973 for *The Siege of Krishnapur*. Set in the imaginary town of Krishnapur, the events are inspired by those that occurred in the Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow and Kanpur during the First War of Indian Independence of 1857.

Renaissance

Indian English writers of the eighties found that Rushdie's paradigm allowed them a new freedom of both form and content. *Midnight's Children* declared that there were as many equally valid versions of Indian identity as there were Indians. The Indian sales of the novel were unprecedentedly high, heralding a new spirit of freedom and a willingness to experiment with subject, language, and narrative strategy. This concept proved to be very liberating for many Indian English writers. The eighties and nineties have been distinguished by an Indian English literary explosion as writers have found themselves free to speak in a multiplicity of voices and write in a multiplicity of modes.

Roy's Booker – A Decade Later

The God of Small Things (1997) is a politically charged novel by Indian author Arundhati Roy. The book is a description of how the small things in life build up, translate into people's behavior and affect their lives. The story primarily takes place in a town named Ayemenem now part of Kottayam in Kerala state of India. This first novel is written in English by a native Indian who makes her home in India. The story centers on events surrounding the visit and drowning death of the twins' Rahel and Estha's half-English cousin, a nine year old girl named Sophie Mol. The visit overlaps with a love affair between Ammu and

the family's carpenter, Velutha, a member of the Untouchable caste—"The God of Loss / The God of Small Things" (274). The Booker for an Indian village love story?!? Till recently, such an outrageous suggestion would have been dismissed as a commendable piece of fiction. Now it is too true to be fiction. To the West, Ayemenem became a buzzword for a child's view of an adult world, a little world peopled by tragic feudal Christians, a communist, and a few handsome untouchables.

Inheritance of a Booker

In an interview Kiran Desai has justly acknowledged the motivation from her predecessors:

> Naipaul's *Bend in the River* and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* together changed the way I wanted to write about being Indian in the world. They are often seen as coming from two opposing camps, but I've learnt from both. (Interview by Sophie Rochester)

Indian-origin writer Kiran Desai won Booker Prize for her second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, a story rich with sadness about globalisation and with joy at the small surviving intimacies of Indian village life. The novel, which took eight years to write, draws on her experience of leaving India. It is set in the north-eastern Himalayas and New York, and is about an embittered old judge who wants to retire in peace. It interweaves his story with that of his orphaned teenage granddaughter, his cook and his dog.

The White Tiger Roars – Aravind Adiga, at the age of 33 won the 40th Man Booker prize for his debut novel, *The White Tiger*, a vivid exploration of India's class struggle told through the story of a village boy who becomes the chauffeur to a rich man. It tracks the ambitions and divided loyalties of Balram Halwai, the son of a rickshaw-puller from an Indian village. As he passes through two different Indias on his journey from the darkness of village life to the light of entrepreneurial success, Balram begins to realise how the tiger might finally escape his cage, and he is not afraid to spill a little blood along the way. The 'white tiger' itself is symbolic of the enlightenment among 'others'. He is not *any* kind of tiger. 'The creature that gets born only once every generation in the jungle.' (276) This is a point of realization and motivation that he would not be able to be in a cage for the rest of his life.

Commonalities in the Booker winning Indian narratives

Postcolonial Products – the Self and the Nation

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, examines the thirty years of his life covered by this novel (and the thirty-six years that preceded it) in order to understand who he is. In the similar

vein, the other three novels are also protagonist's search for identity. As Homi Bhabha points out in his introduction to *Nation and Narration,* that the Nationalism is by definition ambivalent, and the ambivalence of the nation is mirrored in the very form of the national narrative. It is significant, too, that Bhabha uses Tom Nairn's term, 'the modern Janus,' for the nation, since the Indian English novel was, sometimes with dubious distinction, dubbed 'Janus-faced' by Indian critics in the seventies. Another sense of Janus-faced, however, is 'sensitive to dualities and polarities,' and this is the spirit in which Rushdie writes, of sensitive to the dualities inherent in postcoloniality, accepting — even flaunting — them rather than attempting to deny or conceal them, and elevating condition into method in his metanarrative.(27)

Rather than merely forcing the self into the image of the nation, Rushdie comically and mock-heroically insists on creating Nation in the imaginative image of Self. Even though Saleem is cracking into as many pieces as there are Indians, as there are stories to tell, he has successfully told his story - imperfect, unreliable, distorted, needing endless revising to be sure-but nonetheless triumphantly his own.

Roy, in her novel, expresses the serious issues through her story by scrubbing the veneer to expose the unknown and unseen reality. Indians may enjoy the money brought in by World Bank; little do they know that it is accompanied by the pesticides that prove harmful to the sea-chain. *The God of Small Things is about the Communal politics and The Inheritance is explicitly infused by the Gorkha movement and informs the readers about border politics.* Desai's descriptions and her humor make this a novel of national and personal identity fascinating.

The White Tiger has been praised for presenting the contrasting images of obscene wealth and deep poverty in India; revolves around the great divide between those Indians 'who have made it' and those who have not. Adiga, who was inspired to write the book after he travelled through India as a TIME magazine journalist, said that he wanted to portray the condition of India's under-class after encountering a new India. It was described by one reviewer as an *'unadorned portrait'* of India seen *'from the bottom of the heap.'*

Master- Servant Relationship

In Roy's *The God of Small Things* Velutha is an untouchable, a paravan whose family has been working for Chacko's for generations. Unlike other untouchables, Velutha has a self-assured air, and has become indispensable at the pickle factory because of his skills. Rahel

and Estha look up to Velutha, and he befriends them. The day of Margaret and Sophie's arrival, Ammu and Velutha realize that they are attracted to one another.

Here, in Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Balram Halwai works as a driver with a powerful family and the next sections of the book trace Balram's rise, where, after first being obliged to drive the humble Maruti Suzuki, he reaches a triumphant position behind the wheel of the family's chief car, the luxurious Honda City. A hundred pages into the novel, we migrate from Darkness into Light, from the feudal world of Bihar into the metropolitan of Gurgaon and Delhi. Balram knows that his employer's family will visit vengeance on his. But he doesn't care. His brothers and their children may be slaughtered, the women of the family may be raped, but he is indifferent. Adiga wants us to see all this as emblematic of the new Indian tough guy, the murderous entrepreneur who will step over any number of dead bodies to get his way. He gives the tips of making entrepreneur in 21st century with no formal education and no self books but learning from life itself.

Thus the protagonists of the novels are representatives of the downtrodden- untouchable, a helpless child, a midnight child with eccentric looks and powers or an aspirant driver. One amazing observation is that *Midnight's Children* starts by sending off the Colonisers, Roy celebrates the nativity, Desai is disturbed by the national insurgency and international non-acceptance and Adiga moves ahead with keeping colonizers at bay and dealing with Oriental success. He persists of the bright 'yellow and brown man' future:

I was a servant once, you see.

Only three nations have never let themselves be ruled by foreigners: China, Afghanistan, and Abyssinia. These are the only three nations I admire. (5)

He uses the metaphors of cars beautifully to further elaborate on the servant-master relationship. He says the Maruti is just like a servant as it does what the driver wants him to do whereas the Honda City is a larger car, 'a more sophisticated creature, with a mind of his own; he has power steering, and an advanced engine, and he does what *he* wants to do'. (62) Even the numerous castes and destinies in India have been reduced to just two: men with Big Bellies, and men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat- or get eaten up,(64) and the masters believed in catching them young to keep them for life and these were servants, not specialized, but jacks of all trades.

But in India – or, at least, in the Darkness- the rich don't have drivers, cooks, barbers, and tailors. They simply have servants. (69)

The novel mentions the fondness for Lord Hanuman who himself was in service of Lord Ram and Goddess Sita. Through the protagonist the reader peeps into and get the feel of the life that the 'other's lead. These people are servile, but they realize their timidity as the cause of their condition:

'That fellow has balls,' one of the drivers said. 'If all of us were like that, we'd rule India, and they would be polishing our boots.' (149)

Balram does not feel guilty; instead he is filled with rage: The more I stole from him, the more I realized how much he had stolen from me. (230)Thus this protagonist who 'was a driver to a master' was now 'a master of drivers.' And he explains that

A White Tiger keeps no friends. It's too dangerous.

He is very hopeful that 'One night, will they all join together – will they destroy the Rooster Coop?' (303)

Knowing the ways of living in a big city that too successfully he says: I am in the Light now. (313) He justifies his murder through the story of Buddha he had read on a wrapping paper that like him he is neither man nor a demon;

Neither, I say, I have woken up, and the rest of you are still sleeping, and that is the only difference between us. (315)

Having finishing his story of entrepreneurship, he goes on to disclose his future endeavours of switching over to estate business and then opening of the school for poor children where they all would be white tigers and he would teach the facts and not stories. A school full of White Tigers, unleashed on Bangalore! (319) Towards the end of the novel he is reflecting over his family back at home and exhilarating at the thought

I've made it! I've broken out of coop!

He is not without the fear of being caught and screwed up by the police whom he had been bribing but he says that he would never say that he made a mistake that night in Delhi when he slit his master's throat and

I'll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a *minute*, what it means not to be a servant. (321)

Dystopian Depiction

As the texts are the postcolonial depiction of nation from different standpoints, these can aptly be used to understand the effects

of colonialism. These works can be said to represent nations that have suffered the 'sentence of history' – subjugation, domination, Diaspora, displacement – that we learn the most enduring lessons for living and thinking (Bhabha 438). Rushdie also uses fragmentation and disintegration as a metaphor for the loss of identity. As the postcolonial identity is fragmented and multifarious through its collision with other cultures, Saleem's narrative is also convoluted and unwilling to represent one homogenous interpretation of history.

Told from the perspective of seven-year-old Rahel, in *The God of Small Things* the consequences of the intertwined events—the drowning and the forbidden love affair—are dire. Estha stops speaking; Ammu is banished from her home, dying miserably and alone at age 31; Rahel is expelled from school, drifts, marries an American, whom she later leaves. Ammu and the twins live on sufferance in the Ayemenem house and the family's pickle factory comes into conflict with the Communists. It is a story of forbidden affections, of children abused and criminalized, and of families ruptured.

In *The Inheritance...* we have Jemubhai Patel, a Cambridge-educated retired judge whose unrequited Anglophilia has condemned him to a lifetime of loneliness and self-hatred; his granddaughter, Sai lives with the judge in his grand, crumbling mountain home; Gyan, joins a group of insurgents agitating for an independent Nepali state; and Biju roams silently through a series of menial New York restaurant jobs. The majority of people we meet in the story dislike/abhor/hate India and they wish to get out as quickly as possible. "Better leave sooner. . . India is a sinking ship . . ." The only people who care for the country are the Nepalis who constitute for 80% of the population in this area; they want to stay but under their own rule and when they can't get what they want, they use force.

The next novel *The White Tiger* is a sad story about country's poor state of affairs: incomplete schooling in the country produce half-baked minds which is the source of all confusion and in the beginning he invokes God in reverence to 'shine light' on his 'dark story.' The hospitals and schools are the foundations that prospective politicians lay as a bait to capture lots of votes. He talks about the façade that has been put by bureaucracy; he explicates the splendour of democracy and exposes the sham.

Space or a place of setting

Being part of the Indian diaspora gives one an emotional location to work from, if not a precise geographical one. All these books are a

visit or a return journey to India, the space that each author harbours in his heart and the perspective that was too important to give up. They are evidence to the fact of belongingness which is above the world of passports; that literature is located beyond flags and anthems, in simple ideas of loyalty.

Midnight's Children takes the readers, along with the historical temporal journey, from the north of Indian Bombay through Amritsar and Agra. The choice of a place or setting of the novel can not entirely depend on the theoretical research but the author has to have felt and lived there. In Roy, the moss-green Meenachal river through Ayemenem town forms a sedate backdrop.

The Inheritance... is set in 1986 in Kalimpong — a Himalayan town in India's northeastern corner — as well as in New York: again all the places author has some affiliation to. Adiga's book purports to tell the story of a murder committed by its narrator from the Eastern Indian state of Bihar, who moves first to the bucolic world of Laxmangarh, mining centre of Dhanbad and then to the prosperous suburb of Gurgaon near Delhi to the booming city of Bangalore. Balram refers to Bihar as the world of 'Darkness', a term that appears repeatedly in the book in opposition to 'Light' – i.e. the sophisticated urban destinations to which the narrator moves on to.

Indian ethos

As exemplified in the introductory part of the essay, India has been consistently producing award-winning authors or inspiring other writers to base their works on Indian colours, themes and identity. Unafraid either of public censure or government censors, Rushdie sought to embrace the sights, sounds, and smells of the India of his dreams and memories in all their multiplicity, and was determined to leave nothing out.

Roy has revitalized the sense of belonging by evoking the smells and sights of Ayemenem and has assured its tourist value on the world map of exotic locations. The novel is seeped-in with the Indian traditions and beliefs. The rigidity of the prevailing 'Love Laws,' the false affluence of the under-debt Indian weddings and the sufferings accepted by the 'wretched Man-less' Kochamma owing to her failure in love,

> She subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a *divorced* daughter — ... she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a *divorced* daughter from a *love* marriage, well, words

could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a *divorced* daughter from a *intercommunity love* marriage – Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (46)

The novel is rich with Indian family relationships, social customs and mores, politics, and the most universal of human emotions and behaviour. *The Inheritance...* can be read almost as Sai reads her Brontë, with our heart in our chest, inside the narrative, and the narrative inside us. Kiran Desai flavours her novel with the aromatic native words like *puja, mia-bibi, mithai,* and such like that give the Indian flavour; she also includes certain prevalent superstitions like appeasing the snakes asking their forgiveness.

Adiga in this context has to say that India just teems with untold stories, and no one who is alive to the poetry, the anger and the intelligence of Indian society will ever run out of stories to write. His work also exposes the shams of the Indian culture where the weddings are status showcase; often ending-up in heavy debts and the poor children often have to stake their studies to work along with their families to pay them off.

Women Characters

In *Midnight's Children*, women are seen to be the powerful practitioners of yet another mode of connection, the passive-aggressive. In spite of their seeming lack of control in the public sphere, they loom large in Saleem's family life, as did Aunt Alia, who 'fed us the *birianis* of dissension and the *nargisi koftas* of discord,' and whose *kormas*, 'spiced with forebodings as well as cardamoms,' wrought a terrible vengeance. As the women do in the private sphere, so does Saleem in the universe of his narrative, namely, elevate the passive mode into equal significance with the active, and the metaphorical into equal prominence with the literal. (21)

The God of Small Things revolves around the main women characters of three generations and with varied outlooks. It also exhibits the feminist struggle of Mammachi and emerging of the New Woman in Ammu. Not very behind are the other two novels *The Inheritance...* with its little granddaughter who has inherited the title's loss which resulted her search for identity and is important to the insurgency of the novel; the two sisters residing at Mon Ami also reveled themselves in the memories of the glorious global past and which supports the diametrically contrastive present of their correspondent daughter abroad. Adiga does not have active women characters to participate in

the nefarious but self-uplifting activities of the protagonist-villain; perhaps it would have altered the story-line. So the success of the plot owes to the deliberate absence of the active women characters in the novel.

Prizing the 'Other'

Lacan's well-known aphoristic formulations that "desire is the desire of the Other' and 'the unconscious is the discourse of the Other' necessarily entail that the human subject is a social subject. Ammu's choice of Velutha's love, and rejection of the paternal law breaks the rigidity of caste stratification, like Lacan's Antigone following a commitment to her desire in conflict with state power.

The god of the title is multi-faceted, he is a god that rescues the system fallen on corrupt times, god that preserves the sanctity of the repressive society. *The God of Small Things* ends with the single word, 'Tomorrow:' the woman's promise to meet her lover again, as if the novel too holds out the promise of a future. Ammu and Velutha are reunited in the end, which is symbolically mentioned in the book.

Biju in *The Inheritance of Loss* and his father who is cook represent their class in the novel; they support the illogical beliefs and exhibit the desires and the life-style of the servants. Michael Portillo, the chairman of that year's panel of judges, praised Mr. Adiga's novel, saying that it prevailed "Because the judges felt that it shocked and entertained in equal measure." Mr. Adiga admitted that it was a

> "voice of the men you meet as you travel through India — the voice of the colossal underclass." "This voice was not captured," he added, "... portraying them as mirthless humorless weaklings as they are usually."

If Roy sniffs at the stench and smells of bus conductor, Adiga's protagonist is fascinated by the conductor who seems to be 'living his life.' The boys engaged in the tea shops remain 'boys' irrespective of their age; they were, unlike Balram, 'human spiders' who worked with all sincerity and dedication. Whether Velutha's or the White Tiger's; the Story is about 'the Other'; but 'the Other' with a difference. Perhaps he is 'the Other' who is different from all others of his class.

Language

The exuberance of language and style led to the enthusiastic reception of *Midnight's Children's* publication. His use of English is fragmented and disjointed and he often intersperses English and Indian words into his prose: "And drinking so much, *janum*...that's not good

(106); and "Come, *cousinji*, lady is waiting!" Furthermore, the English is translated into a different form through Rushdie's use of puns, run-on words, and insertion of the native words. For example, the text contains words and idioms such as *tamasha* (an entertaining scene); *goonda* (thief, vulgar person); *dhobis* (washermen); *junglee* (uncivilized); *bap re bap* (Oh my God!). These words are sometimes literally translated or just mingled in with the rest of the sentence. According to Sanga, Rushdie is trying to achieve two things: first, these words fit into Rushdie's description of Indian, and he must represent particular experiences as closely as possibly; and second, by not explaining the translation, Rushdie is positing a sense of ambivalence about various terms and establishes a form of resistance to the dominant discourse.

"Roy stretches the English language in all directions," Rosemary Dinnage wrote in the *New York Review of Books*. The Booker committee praised: "With extraordinary linguistic inventiveness Roy funnels the history of south India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins." Roy sure has an eagle's eye for the beautiful and the tragic, creating great lines for literature like "dissolute bluebottle hum vacuously in the fruity air." Who else could recount "the disconnected delights of underwater farting" as Estha and Rahel frolicked in the grey-green Meenachal? The Malayalam words are liberally used in conjunction with English.

Rushdie and Roy's triumph owes much to their overwhelming talent to invent a new idiom and vocabulary to tell the story. Her verbal exuberance accounts for the defamiliarising quality of her prose, her metaphorical exactitude and striking similes: a moon-lit river falling from a swimmer's arms like "sleeves of silver;" the smell of shit hovering over a village "like a hat." Roy with the felicity of her lingual expression personifies the beauty of the place: 'gabled roof pulled over its ears like a low hat.' To make her imagery emphatic and more appealing she often dabs it with colours; freshly painted yellow church or 'the red had bled away.' Use of parentheses explains, defines, opine and even provide tongue-in-cheek humour. The italics are used to voice the dead, inform the written, inactive and passive. Her narrative has woofs and warps of prose and poetry woven into it. The novelistic elements are blended with the poetic techniques, which render the prose lyrical; juxtaposing the genres of romance and realism. The similes are fabulously fabricated, juxtaposing the ordinary with the bizarre. *The Inheritance of Loss* is also an exuberantly written novel that mixes colloquial and more literary styles whose language draws us in and pins us there.

What of *Balram Halwai*? What does he sound like? Despite the odd *namaste, daal, paan* and *ghat,* his vocabulary is not sprinkled with North Indian vernacular terms. His sentences are mostly short and crudely constructed, apparently a reflection of the fact that we're dealing with a member of the 'subaltern' classes. He doesn't engage in Rushdian word-play. He refers to 'kissing some god's arse', an idiomatic expression that doesn't exist in any North Indian language and also 'Half-formed ideas bugger one another, and make more half-formed ideas.' He sneers: 'They're so yesterday.' Dogs are referred to as 'mutts'. Yet whose vocabulary and whose expressions are these? There is a jangling dissonance of the language and the falsity of the expressions. This is a posh English-educated voice trying to talk dirty, without being able to pull it off. This is not Salinger speaking as Holden Caulfield, or Joyce speaking as Molly Bloom. It is certainly not Ralph Ellison or James Baldwin, whom Adiga has claimed as his models in speaking for the underdog. What we are dealing with is someone with no sense of the texture of Indian vernaculars, yet claiming to have produced a realistic text.

Marketing Sensed

In 1984, Shyamala Narayan wrote: "Publishers claim that the novel has sold 4,000 copies in hardcover, and 45,000 in paperback (in addition to the pirated editions); these sales figures are unprecedented for an Indian-English novelist."(5) *Midnight's Children* commercial success certainly helped to pave the way for future Indian English writers as the publishers in India became more attentive to the domestic market for fiction in English, and publishers in Britain and the United States became more receptive to new writers from India. If *Midnight's Children* were to be published today, sixteen years later, it might not receive the same positive welcome in the current social and political climate. If it had been published in India by an Indian publisher, it might not have won the Booker Prize. And without the acclaim outside India, it might not have been read with such eagerness inside India. Well these are the new and valuable insights into the changing relationships between what Todd calls "the mechanics of commerce" and "the formation of a particular kind of literary canon." Though the Booker is his central concern, Todd makes clear that the tremendous success of this prize—the dominant place it now holds on Britain's literary calendar, the great hoopla of publicity that surrounds it, the phenomenal sales boost it can represent, and the many imitators, or "baby bookers," it has spawned—can only be understood in the context of larger shifts in both the economic and the symbolic markets for culture, shifts of which it is both a cause and an effect.

Conclusion – Have We had Enough Bookers?

Whether they are Beauty Pageants or Booker, the laurels once dreamt of were aspired by the lucky few who won them to put India on the World Map. But is sustainability a problem with Indian genes? Once the peak is attained why always a descent. Some peaks are attained to be there. **The first Indian to win the prestigious Booker Prize, Arundhati Roy brings recognition to, and opens up a global market for Indian writing in English. But with Kiran Desai's skillful weaving back and forth events there is an** apparent lack of clear perspective; things appear confused just like the "smoke mingled with the mist."(2) Owing to this surrounding mist of understanding, the characters suffer a sense of loss, which is the thematically entitled *The Inheritance of Loss*. Portillo went on to explain that the novel had won overall because of *'its originality'*. He said that *The White Tiger* presented *'a different aspect of India'* and was a novel with *'enormous literary merit'*.

This novel might have presented a different aspect for them but its victory invited the displeasure of many critics from the literary world. They felt that the plot has no twists and turns, no real surprises; there is no sleight of hand failing to meet Booker standards. And we readers are witness to the absence of any Indian author even in the shortlist of Booker prize for the past few years.

Perhaps, Mridu Khullar Ralph attempts to provide an answer:

> Indeed, many of India's young and bestselling-authors are no longer aspiring to write Booker – worthy novels. Instead, they're writing free-flowing narratives on the travails of daily life in second-or third – tier Indian cities that resonate with the millions that live in these oft-forgotten towns...out passing sales no. of Booker winners." (Sept.16, 2011, 'Make Room for Hinglish')

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